The Child at Home

by

Cynthia Asquith

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Cynthia Asquith

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The Child at Home

"No man can tell but he that loves his children, how many delicious accents make a man's heart dance in the pretty conversation of these dear pledges: their childishness, their stammering, their little angers, their innocence, their imperfections, their necessities are so many little emanations of joy and comfort to him that delights in their persons and society; but he that loves not his wife and children, feeds a lioness at home, and broods a nest of sorrow."—JEREMY TAYLOR.

I

INTRODUCTION

THIS small book on a large subject makes no pretence to embody any comprehensive system for the general upbringing of children.

Far from being a "Mother's Manual," it contains no expert advice as to the requisite numbers of either physical or mental vitamines and calories. Hints on health and education have crept in, but its pages will be found entirely devoid of dogmas on diet, clothing, and education.

It is mainly a collection of impressions of certain scenes and situations in childhood, derived from simultaneous efforts to remember the past and to observe the present. For evidence, I have peered through the mists at my own infancy, and stared at the children around me. Having tried to see "grown-ups" with the eyes of childhood, and children with the eyes of a "grown-up,"—from the mental confusion of the blended vision, I now venture

to falter forth a few words of occasional diagnosis and prescription.

Many of my random suggestions will be found to refer to the great importance of one particular part of the parent's function, that which consists, in what may be called, the *editing* of life. The profitable "fun," so obvious that it may be overlooked, to be got out of many of the quite commonplace incidents in the lives of mother and child is enlarged on, and hints are given as to how to drain the utmost drop of honey from flowers accessible to all, and, at the same time, how best to neutralize the poison from such stings as are inevitable. For the truism, "There's nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so," is supremely applicable to childhood.

Infinite the "grown-up person's" power of suggestion and dramatization. Owing to mishandling, how many treats go wrong and become ordeals! Not only should there be no such sad miscarriage, but on the contrary, under skilful editing, how easily are necessary trials actually converted into treats!

Does not the skilful mother (by encouraging the display of courage) know how to turn

actual pain into something very like pleasure, while, in the hands of an equally well-meaning bungler, even a picnic may become a penance. Endless the scope for ingenuity, both in the dodging, or rather transmuting, of the disagreeable, and in the dramatizing—by deliberately dwelling on it—of the delightful. No futile denial of pain and difficulty is advocated. By all means acknowledge the adjacency of the thorn, but prove the rose a reward well worth the prick. You cannot level hills, but you can teach the enjoyment of effort.

The possession of a child is the biggest investment life offers. Immense the inevitable dividends of joy and sorrow. In the interests of wholesome hedonism, a mother's obligations to herself, as well as to her children, cannot be too strongly insisted on. Since you are doomed to pangs untold of grief and anxiety, see to it that at least you forego none of your perquisites of enjoyment and amusement.

Remember that you will never, on any occasion, be able to impart the maximum of fun unless you yourself share in it. Drain every

drop of the sweet as well as the bitter. Don't appreciate the pathos of children and miss their equally endearing comicality. Always get your laugh, as a mother, as well as your cry.

Some parents seem so preoccupied by the staggering responsibility of having sentenced human beings to life, that they appear to lose sight of any lighter side of their vocation—missing, as it were, the comic relief of the situation. Better, no doubt, than the other extreme of forgetting the trust in the toy:

> "A child's a plaything for an hour;
> Its pretty tricks we try
> For this or for a longer space;
> Then tire and lay it by."

But if, indeed, there be any parents of this school, no use in assailing such platitude-proof ears with propaganda. Of course it is impossible to take the office of parent too seriously, but it is equally impossible to take it too gaily.

It is by making the most of all the trivial jokes and joys, as well as of the trials and troubles of childhood, in order to cultivate courage, love and fun, that you will, day by

day, be forging the best armour and weapons for your children's encounter with those "slings and arrows of outrageous Fortune" you so deeply dread.

Never exploit your children for your entertainment, but do not omit to make full use of their invaluable alchemic power of restoring to *you* the "visionary gleam—the glory and the freshness of a dream." Their lovely *re*Open Sesame gifts should never be wasted. Suffer their hands to fling "magic casements" open wide and, with them, look through in gratitude and joy.

In connection with happiness, I have especially dwelt on one point. I often hear mothers, quite able to afford adequate food and attention, lamenting their lack of money on the grounds that their children will miss so much in the way of enjoyment. How morbid are any such misgivings!

To alleviate the sufferings of illness, wealth is undeniably of service, but to enhance the enjoyments of health, it is, thank goodness, superfluous. The "fun and gladness" recipes in this book are for the most part accessible to the slenderest incomes. To feed,

clothe, and educate children is, alas, crushingly expensive, but to *entertain* them is matter of time, trouble and talent, not of money. Consider a child's gift of ecstasy, and ask yourself if it is not a very incompetent mother who will make the lack of wealth an excuse for a healthy son faltering in his "great task of happiness." Are not most of his principal pleasures free as the air he breathes?

This is not to deny that such luxuries as ponies, motor-cars and journeys are intoxicating delights to a child; but since his cup of bliss can so easily be made to overflow without any such costly catering, why worry about the lack of it?

No child need be docked of a single one of his birthright of laughs through the lack of expensive pleasures. His is the art, with the minimum of straw, to create the maximum of bricks.

There was once a so-called "madman," who, dying in an asylum, left a strangely beautiful document called his "Last Will and Testament," from which I quote the following extract:

"I give to good fathers and mothers, in trust

for their children, all good little words of praise and encouragement, all quaint pet names and endearments, and I charge the said parents to use them generously as the needs of the children require. I leave the children, for the term of their childhood, the flowers, fields, blossoms, and woods, with the right to play among them freely, warning them at the same time against thistles and thorns.

"I devise to the children the banks, the brooks and the golden sands beneath waters thereof, and the white clouds that float high over the giant trees, and I leave to the children long, long days to be merry in, and the night and the moon, and the train of the Milky Way to wonder at. . . .

"I devise to the boys jointly all the useful idle fields, all the streams where one may fish or where, when grim winter comes, one may skate, all the pleasant waters where one may swim, to have and to hold the same for the period of their boyhood. The meadows, with the clover, blossoms and butterflies thereof, the woods and their appurtenances, squirrels, birds, echoes and strange noises, all the distant places which may be visited, together with the

adventures there found. I give to the said boys each his own place by the fireside at night, with all the pictures that may be seen in the burning wood, to enjoy without let or hindrance and without any encumbrance or care."

II

CHOOSING A NURSE

"Oh, what did the other children do?
And what were childhood wanting you?"
R. L. Stevenson.

I often hear people express amazement at a mother's willingness to hand her baby over to a professional nurse. "How can she," they exclaim, "bear even temporarily to relinquish the first place in her own child's life?" "How unnatural thus to forego all the daily delights of that delicious dawning!" "Imagine allowing another woman to tend and soothe one's own baby—thus, to a great extent, monopolizing the first harvest of budding response, and the earliest tributes of incipient love." "To think that his first trust should be in another's arm, his first silver tinklings of talk fall on other ears!" . . .

"Who ran to catch me when I fell,
And kissed the place to make it well?"

Certainly to forfeit the right to answer "Mother" to that poignant little query must

cost a pang to any woman with a sense of the picturesque.

And yet, believe me, it is a pang that should be borne. In the first transport of baby-worship, some young mothers, determined against any such delegation, resolve to brook no rival in their nursery, and to devote themselves body and soul to unintermittent ministrations. However understandable, this is, I'm sure, in most cases a shortsighted policy. If you are able to afford a good nurse, my advice is, by all means avail yourself of the best you can find.

Natural enough the wish to earn your own child's love, by yourself embracing all the toil. But remember that the proper care of a baby is so exacting a task that it demands complete dedication. Take a bird's-eye view of your career as a mother. Unless you are an extremely exceptional woman, will you not, by refusing to delegate duties an expert would perform better, be handicapping, if not disqualifying, yourself for the important work of later phases?

Through tackling the "sole charge" ambition, you *may* become competent, adequately

to supply the relatively impersonal needs of infancy, but what sort of an existence will you yourself be leading?

Constantly occupied and tired, how will you find the necessary leisure for self-equipment as a satisfactory companion to a son who has outgrown the nursery? Can you afford thus to specialize? Will it not be to risk partial atrophy of other faculties he will need in you when he is older?

Hard that it should be so, but unquestionably, if you entirely sacrifice your own life to his babyhood, you run grave risk of failing him later on. You are, as it were, laming yourself before he is ready for the walk on which he really needs you.

If you appear to have no object in life than to be a background to him, he will accept the situation and love you with the comfortable love of custom, but each step of development will tend to be away from, rather than towards you. Don't cut yourself down to fit one fleeting phase. Be something to be grown up to, not out of, like the perambulator and the rocking-horse.

To be of the best use to your child, it is

essential that you cling to an independent life and interests and breathe a distinct atmosphere of your own with a glamour he will appreciate. You must have friends to bequeath, knowledge to impart, be able to initiate him into the realms of books, pictures and outdoor life.

To qualify as his interpreter, to make yourself his fit guide, philosopher and friend, demands time and energy which will inevitably be squandered if you concentrate on the care of his body during those critical years, when you should still be building your own boat on the shore, so as to be able to accompany him as far as possible in his navigation of life.

Do not—for the indulgence of shortsighted love or at the dictates of jealousy—do yourself and him the injustice of thus stunting your growth, diminishing your horizon and expending your capital.

All this is, of course, not to say that it is impossible for a mother to fulfil each several function in turn. There are women capable of, so to speak, cooking every course, but very exceptional strength, energy and talent are required.

Better not jump to the conclusion that you happen to be so endowed.

. . . . . .

Having weighed the pros and cons, and from worthy, unworthy or mixed motives, decided in favour of having a nurse, what a difficult choice lies in front of an inexperienced mother! One of my recurring astonishments is the casualness with which some women will engage a nurse. They would not dream of settling on a cook without making more exhaustive inquiries, and to decide between two chintzes or three hats would worry them far more. Is it that they despair of realizing their ideal, or is it possible that they underrate the importance of a nurse's function?

Surely there can be no more difficult and momentous choice than that of the woman in whose favour we, to a certain extent, abdicate our own responsibility, by entrusting her with the daily care of our children. How fortunate the mother who, at the outset, finds one who will be able to stay the course, sufficing for all the different stages of infancy.

Many women change nurses repeatedly and lightheartedly. With some this is even a mat-

ter of policy. They may be afraid of the children growing too dependent on the one person and suffering too much when separation becomes inevitable, and sometimes, I fear, the motive is the unworthy one of jealousy. Perhaps the nurse's holiday is being discussed and some such childish phrase as "But who will *save* me then?" makes the mother wince and arouses dog-in-the-manger instincts.

To remit the toil and still to claim unrivalled love is unreasonable and unfair. A mother who, while accepting a nurse's unstinted devotion, grudges her a full measure of love, even though it temporarily ousts herself from the first place in her own child's heart, is, by base ingratitude, qualifying to be a warning rather than an example to her children.

I am sure the shifting influences of a nursery in a constant state of flux must be bewildering and bad for children. If there be a nurse at all, the ideal is that she should be a rock of trust and love, fixed and secure in the child's world.

Quite apart from the child's own interests, is it not too hard that such complete dedication as is exacted (no hour in the twenty-four can a nurse truly call her own) should yet be form-

ing no roots? Think of it. To be the unremitting "slave of the lamp" from dawn to dusk, and all the while only to sow what others shall reap.

Too often the beloved ministering giantess of babyhood is only a source of painful embarrassment when, years after, she comes to tea and finds herself a stranger where she once so patiently presided.

In common gratitude, mothers should strive to keep her memory green and, when the relationship is permanently continued, as in the classical case of Robert Louis Stevenson, it adds greatly to the beauty and wealth of life.

To return to the choice. Experienced mothers, never away from home, may only require some one on whom they can implicitly rely for the carrying out of orders; but those, whom circumstances compel to delegate their daily duties, have a terrible responsibility in choosing a steward for so solemn a trust. What type of woman should be selected? The importance of health, voice and manner are obvious, but what qualities of heart and mind are required?

It must be remembered that, to a large ex-

tent, she will be responsible for their growth, their nervous system, their manners, their religion, for it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the way in which life is first edited to children. It is hers to instil the prejudices, fears, loves, faiths which count for so much, to determine their diet—physical, mental and spiritual—in short, largely to sow such harvest as they will be reaping for the whole of their lives. How difficult to find everything you want in one person!

The woman who would be the best for their curls may be the worst for their character. The one with the nicest mind may be disastrously lacking in method. Humour and hygiene are, alas! not inseparable. But the paragon who has the right instincts plus the best training does exist, and infinite trouble should be taken to find her.

She will be scrupulously, pedantically exact in the care of bottles, etc., with the hospital standard of cleanliness and order, and at the same time imaginative, elastic and unstereotyped in the care of natures.

It is hers "to warn, to comfort and command," to nourish their bodies and fancies, to

be a shining example of courage, sweetness and humour—teaching them their "great task of happiness"—to guard without coddling, to love without spoiling, to control without cramping.

How difficult it is to know what is really going on in the nursery (surely the one sphere where eavesdropping is permissible!). Few children—even if they know there is a tale to tell—will have the nerve to tell it. They do not understand the relative position of nurse and parents, and would sooner imagine the sun and moon to be subject to dismissal than the despot of the nursery. Children, stricken and stupefied under the sway of fear, suffer in silence, day by day painfully tying knots for the psychoanalyst's future unravelling.

Added to the dangers of silence they may genuinely love a very harmful nurse. Children are naturally fond of whoever tucks them up in bed. It is difficult to dodge their affection in close proximity; besides, the best meaning nurse might, alas! be the most injurious.

Much difference of opinion exists as to how much of a disciplinarian the nurse should be. Rather idle, fair-weather parents sometimes

rejoice in the idea that they may leave all the correcting and stiffening in the hands of a martinet upstairs, who will serve as a foil to all the indulgence and fun downstairs. I once heard a mother say she would definitely prefer a harsh and disagreeable nurse to harden her children and make it unnecessary for her to leaven their paradise.

Many mothers dread "soft-handling" for their children. They think that to be too much lapped in love, is to be morally coddled —like being brought up in a hothouse, and made hypersensitive to the east winds of the outside world, into which, sooner or later, they must emerge—too misleading an atmosphere to be good preparation for life. But where happiness is concerned, most will favour the bird in the hand. Childhood should be joyous, and, after all, surely the great thing is to lay a solid foundation of love and confidence!

I do not see how a nurse could be too loving; but, of course, she can be too indulgent, and by keeping one who really "spoils" (in the sense of demoralizing) the children, you are indeed pickling a rod for your own back.

Good habits must be inculcated, standards

set and adhered to. There should be no bribery—that leverage of the lazy. Virtue should really seem its own rich reward. The most incompetent nurses govern by alternate threats and bribes. It is difficult to judge the soundness of a system of discipline by immediate results. Good conduct is not necessarily a criterion. Mere control over their behaviour without any real character training may be very unsatisfactory, the nurse's temporary absence often having the effect of undamming a stream. To tie their hands is not to teach them self-control. As early as possible a child's reason should be enlisted, and as often as is convenient he could be told *why* it is he must do this and not do that. Too many mechanical instructions and prohibitions retard the growth of initiative and judgment, and when practicable it is better to suggest a course, rather than to be for ever suppressing a child's own plans. Positives are a much more wholesome diet than negatives. There should certainly be more "Do's" than "Don'ts" in a nurse's vocabulary, and one who is constantly nagging will either irritate children's nerves or thicken their skins.

The golden rule of discipline, and one as to the preservation of which a mother should be assured, is that any order that is given must be enforced. Don't leave it to the child to decide which order is meant to be obeyed or what disaster may ensue!

Scolding and punishment must, as far as possible, be according to intention rather than results. Many nurses will be inconsistent in treatment, depending on the temporary state of their nerves or how busy they happen to be at the time of the offence. The demoralizing leniency of the day on which "Nannie had got out of bed the right way" will be remembered. Children are quick as lawyers to seize on inconvenient precedents.

Any form of indolence is, of course, incompatible with the office of nurse. There are so many tempting short cuts which must be firmly resisted. It is, for instance, so much less trouble to dress and feed a child than to teach him to do things for himself, but a nurse's quickness in encouraging independence is one of the chief tests of her competency. Children should also, however tedious the process, be taught to put their own toys away, to care for

them and to try and mend them—however worthless—when broken.

Overweening pride in her charge is sometimes a pitfall to the devoted nurse. Her competitive spirit may prompt him to premature walking at the price of bandy legs, and her delight in his mental precocity encourage her to over-stimulation, the dangers of which are great and insidious.

For all the importance of morals and manners, the wise care of the health remains in most families the crowning anxiety. Many nervous mothers pin their faith on nurses with hospital training, but I am not sure that here the tendency is not rather to regard childhood as an illness. Ordinary "Nannies" can be unsurpassed in the care of health. See that you have found one who will not try to dose appendicitis away, and whom you can rely on to send for the doctor whenever necessary, but who at the same time will not "Coué" her charges into colds by telling them of incurred draughts. The power of suggestion over children, physically, mentally and morally, can scarcely be exaggerated. From the youngest age upwards, a child who has slightly hurt

himself can be made to laugh or cry according to the tone of voice in which you speak to him. Over-commiseration opens the flood-gates. Cheerfulness reassures him.

Similarly any form of pessimistic labelling is very injurious. Such phrases as "It's no use, he won't do what he's told," "The poor child simply can't get to sleep," induce a disastrous form of fatalism. There must be no Christian resignation in the face of faults, no patient acceptance of disabilities as if they were all destiny-dealt.

It is, of course, indispensably important that mother and nurse should be complete allies. Some nurses seem to regard the mother as their natural enemy, or at best as a foolish elder sister of the children. No child should ever be allowed to catch a glimpse of anything so ugly as jealousy, and there must be complete co-operation and mutual backing-up. Allow the trusted nurse a free hand in the ordering of nursery routine, but never give up your own right of free access. I have known nurses claim the right to issue "no admittance" edicts.

No conflict of opinion between the govern-

ing bodies must be discussed in the children's presence. Once let them realize they can appeal from nurse to mother and *vice versa*, and discipline goes out sighing.

Neither should a child's doings and sayings ever be reported in front of him. Repetition of his witticisms will stifle future ones in self-consciousness or promote painful playing to the gallery. A recital of his misdemeanours will make him feel unduly important, and if his punishment be discussed, how dreadful the doomed dignity he will assume! Every mother should make a practice of seeing her nurse alone for a few minutes each evening. Apart from any requisite diagnosis or prescription, she is sure to be bursting with eagerness to relate the nursery chronicles of the day, and to the mother of her charges an appreciative nurse makes the best company in the world.

A friend of mine congratulated herself on the possession of a nurse who read Bernard Shaw. Personally I do not want "Kultur" in my nursery. The peasant type still rather near to Nature, from whose heart, like flowers from the soil, the great truths (afterwards to be

derided as platitudes) will spontaneously spring, may be expected, I think, to provide the most wholesome and enjoyable food for children's minds.

III

THE NURSERY

"And infants clamorous, whether pleased or pained."
COWPER.

If a mother, a child and his nurse could each in turn be given the use of a magic wand, I wonder how much their tastes would coincide in the creation of their three ideal nurseries?

I don't believe there would be any great incompatibility in their desires, and to give each the utmost satisfaction circumstances permit, should be the ambition of every mother.

Probably one of the dreams most frequently put away, is that of the visualized nursery of a mother's imagination.

Sheer size entering so largely into the picture, very few of us are destined to be able to realize our ideal; but, by ingenuity, a great deal may be done to make the available space as attractive and as convenient as possible.

Fortunately children's spirits are gloriously independent of their surroundings, but the

fact of their daily lives being adequately well-staged makes an enormous difference to their nurse's task, and consequently to her nerves and temper.

Owing to the want of a little forethought and imagination in the original equipment of their premises, how heavily handicapped some nurses are in the cheerful execution of their daily duties. From dawn to dusk their progress is a continual obstacle race, in which they are assailed by wholly unnecessary discomforts of every kind—bad lighting, avoidable draughts and unsuitable furniture. All the labour and space-saving devices which now abound are neglected, and it seems made as difficult as possible for them to keep their rooms clean and what they call "straight."

Naturally all concerned would prefer more space than is usually available. You cannot have too much room for romping purposes, and who can have forgotten that particular ecstasy of childhood experienced in a passage large enough to really let yourself go in? Few houses afford such scope, but the disappointing size of nursery quarters is too often taken as an excuse to fling away ambition and re-

signedly acquiesce in dulness and discomfort. Mere size is not the determining factor, for by the ingenious choice and arrangement of furniture, so much—so very much—can be done to make the most of insufficient space.

As for the children, they can be bounded in a nutshell and count themselves kings of infinite space.

Of all the adjectives they might hear applied to their quarters, that of small would probably surprise them the most. It takes a good many toddling steps to traverse the shortest of rooms, and to eyes so near the ground, everything looms large. Most of us, in revisiting some house only known to childhood, have experienced the shock of finding remembered rooms so strangely shrunk.

Ruskin's dictum, that nothing should be admitted save what "you know to be useful, and believe to be beautiful," is too sweeping; but naturally the amount of furniture in the nursery should be very limited, and ought not to include anything too heavy to be frequently pulled out for sweeping purposes.

In some families there is a regrettable tendency to use the nursery as a sort of lumber-

room to the whole establishment. Photographs, not to be tolerated anywhere else, but the destruction of which sentiment forbids, are hung in close formation on its walls. Trophies of sport — bazaar bargains — the worst wedding presents—everything too ugly for the drawing-room but in too good condition for the rummage sale, "can go into the nursery."

As the object is to have the maximum of open space and the minimum of dust-harbouring objects, the nursery should be the very last of all rooms to shelter anything not purposely intended for its improvement. Suitability should be the only qualification. But to come to "safety first."

There are many ways of reducing the number and gravity of casualties. In fact the day nursery should be so arranged as to be quite safe for the most active and imprudent of babies to be left alone in, untroubled by any "don'ts." One very important point is that all the furniture should be rounded. The absence of any corners will mean far fewer gashed foreheads and jabbed ribs. There should be nothing to trip over, to pull down or far to fall from. A tuggable tablecloth loaded with heavy

objects is very provocative and dangerous. There should be draught-excluders on the doors, and, if the windows are accessible, they must, of course, be barred, and similarly there must be a gate at the top of the stairs. Care must be taken to see that all bars are so spaced as to forbid the passage of a child's head. I once triumphantly forced my own through the bars of my cot. Perhaps pride in the achievement swelled it? In any case all my efforts to withdraw were unavailing, and finally the village carpenter had to be summoned to the rescue of a temporary heroine.

A tall fender securely fixed to the wall is indispensable, for not only the fire, but also the irresistible kettle must be hopelessly out of reach. The coal-scuttle should be wooden, and a lidded one will save many washings during the Christopher Columbus phase through which each child must pass.

A fairly large round table, incapable of wobbling will be required for meals, and it is well worth while to have its top hinged so that, when not in use, it can be pushed against the wall to clear the decks for action. An affixed linoleum cover—to be rubbed over with damp

cloth after each meal, will greatly reduce the laundry bill, and over this a pretty-coloured cloth can be thrown. A child's low table, with little rush-seated chairs to match, is attractive to look at, and invaluable for "sit-still" games. Of course there must be a really comfortable deep armchair for Nurse, and a wide, flat sofa is a great asset—the more Spartan habit of resting on the floor having for the most part been abandoned. There should be a cupboard large enough to house all the crockery—so much labour is saved by having everything in daily use washed upstairs—and an open dresser displaying cheerful china is delightfully decorative.

Since children literally bite the dust, the crawled-over floor must come up to hospital standards of cleanliness. Cork lino is just as hygienic, without being so cold to the feet, as linoleum. Tender-hearted mothers may prefer the idea of a pile carpet, to soften tumbles to a baby in process of becoming a biped. But such a luxury is far too bacilli-harbouring, besides being fatal to the nursery traffic of tops and mechanical trains. All curtains and chair-covers should also obviously be of washing

material. Delightful chintzes full of enthralling incident can be bought for quite low prices.

To have cords on the floor, if the nursery has electric light, is asking for too much trouble, so instead of table lamps, the well-shaded lights, hanging from the ceiling, must be adjustable, to allow of Nurse lowering one to light her work-table.

In designs for the decoration of nurseries, artistic firms have given full rein to their creative fancy. Star-spangled, sky-blue ceilings are suggested for rooms, the walls of which are to be painted with trees, through whose branches flit birds of dazzling plumage. The same brilliant colour scheme is carried out in the elaborately painted wooden furniture, and a raised platform is provided for acting purposes.

In doing up rooms for our own children, few of us can afford to avail ourselves of such lively flights of imagination, neither need the disability cause us any distress. Nurseries can be made pretty, amusing and comfortable at a very small cost, and will almost inevitably acquire so cosily pleasant an atmosphere, that even the very dogs and cats will attach them-

selves to its fireside in preference to any other. The walls should be light and washable, and nothing is more suitable than the quite inexpensive distemper, with one or two good coats of varnish over it. The right shade of yellow is very cheerful, producing the effect of bottled sunshine.

The walls of many nurseries are ornamented with a frieze either of nursery rhymes, or of animals; but these, though quite good company, do not go with pictures, and most mothers will have a few old favourites—truisms of art—on which they will love to feed their children's fancy. "Old masters" should assert themselves in the nursery, and any picture with a story in it exercises great fascination. It is worth remembering that rounded bars are less dust-harbouring than the ordinary picture-rails.

The prettiest kind of nursery furniture now on the market is made of painted wood. If this is too expensive it is quite easy to buy the plain deal and paint it at home.

Cushioned window-seats are always a delightful feature, and very good toy-cupboards (a necessary item) can be made underneath

them. Of course, window-boxes, with flowers for the children themselves to water, are a source of great pride and pleasure.

Shelves will be needed for the rapidly-increasing library, and some must also be provided for the museum of china ornaments which inevitably accumulates. The top shelf should be very high, so that all perilous properties may be safely inaccessible. Large coloured glass balls (to be bought quite cheap in old curiosity shops) hanging from the ceiling look gay and pretty.

A rocking-horse, with its unique capacity for dignified shabbiness though it cannot be considered economical of space, is always a beloved member of the nursery kingdom. Some form of weather prophet is much appreciated, and a moon-faced clock with the loudest possible tick, always seems appropriate. Nurse will enjoy saying, "What does the clock say—Tick—tick—tick? Do what you have to do, quick, quick, quick:" and it will give the children plenty of time to learn (most difficult of lessons) which hand it is that tells the minutes and which the hours.

If you have two unequal rooms to choose

from, far better decide on the largest and sunniest for the day nursery. Provided the window be kept religiously open, two children and their nurse can quite healthily sleep in what may appear a very small room, but the one in which they are to eat and play should be as uncramped as possible.

Naturally the more sunshine permeating their living room the better, whereas in the summer to sleep in a north room is by no means a drawback. The two rooms should be within easy earshot, and, of course, an adjacent bathroom with a sink is an inestimable advantage. The night nursery—sacred to sleepiness, requires very little furniture or incident. Sufficient hanging and lying accommodation for Nurse and the children's clothes must be provided, but one good wardrobe will go a very long way.

The curtains should be thick enough to soften the sunshine "peeping in at morn."

Painted wood cots are delightful, wickerwork ones far too duster-defying. Great care should be taken to see that a child is promoted to a large one directly it is time, sleeping in the pose of a whiting being most injurious.

Many backaches will be spared if a suitably low chair is provided for nurse's use when bathing the baby. An electric kettle and iron will save much time. These are not expensive articles now. Altogether to make your nurseries practical and pretty is far more a question of time than of money, and, apart from your own satisfaction, to do your best to make them so is certainly your duty, not only to the child but also to the nurse who so patiently presides over their daily destinies.

IV

AT TABLE

"Eat slowly: only men in rags
And gluttons old in sin
Mistake themselves for carpet bags,
And tumble victuals in."
SIR WALTER RALEIGH.

GREATLY as all manners and customs have changed of recent years, I doubt whether any have altered more materially than those of children at meals.

Could any scene more surprise a Rip Van Winkle of this century? How he would rub his eyes in bewilderment at both the ethical and hygienic transformation!

Not only has the edict, "Children should be seen, not heard," been revoked in most houses, but the whole theory as to the sort of food they should eat, and the manner in which it should be eaten, has been entirely revised.

Let us glance back at that solemn rite of a luncheon—say some thirty years ago.

In spite of the engaging proximity of faces to plates, the children present a somewhat

grim spectacle. "Business is business" would be a suitable motto, for the silence of Trappists is enjoined and the sounds of munching and swallowing are only broken by the click of crockery and such appropriate words of command as "Bite your food well"—"Finish up your greens"—"Don't leave the fat."

Though Mrs. Squeers' grim tactics of prefacing a meal with brimstone and treacle were not literally copied, yet the theory of breaking the appetite on the stodgy and unattractive before the more playful side of eating could be indulged in, was strictly carried out.

The first course was always a severely practical one, and phases of appetite, legitimately requiring nuances of food, were not recognized.

The child who failed to "conquer" that solid first course, piled "high as Mount Ossa" on his plate, forfeited all claim to any subsequent one of a lighter and more enticing nature.

"If you can't finish that good meat (and how many poor little children would be thankful for it!), how can you possibly want any of that jelly?" "You are not hungry enough to eat bread, how dare you ask for cake?" Such was the absurd theory. Where hunger left off,

gluttony was considered to begin, no intervening phase being admitted.

No wonder the verdict "Grown-up people are so unknowing!" went forth.

At tea I was always compelled to eat two formidable hunks of dry bread before I was allowed so much as to contemplate the blandishments of jam and cake. Now I see children going straight to the point. Unchidden, they at once stretch out their hands for the most rococco cake. They even paint the lily by spreading butter and jam on the same slice of bread. I well remember the first time my astonished eyes saw a "grown-up" indulging in this particular form of excess, and how I expected divine retribution promptly to make her choke.

One result of this prevailing leniency is that the emancipated children of to-day seldom either bolt or gorge. In one's eagerness to reach the more attractive stage of the meal, how one used to wolf the bread which blocked the way to the coveted cake, great boulders of unbitten food being washed down in gulps of milk. Nowadays, when I go to a children's party, I am amazed at the discretion and

moderation displayed. Conscious that they may eat what they like when they like, they take their time and seem, for the most part, to know when they have had enough: in fact, I fear the "weight of too much liberty" deprives them of some of the finest raptures of greed.

In my childhood there were no amiable ideas as to things you didn't like disagreeing with you. Far from thinking the gastric juices required propitiating, the theory was that the unpleasant was wholesome, or at any rate that the wholesome could not possibly be attractive. The fact that appreciated food is easier to digest is now scientifically proved.

It is no exaggeration to say that the whole of my babyhood was troubled by the dread of milk puddings. There is no greater physical torture than to be compelled to swallow anything strangely distasteful, and the horror is cumulative. The prospect of certain puddings became an absolute nightmare. I would rather have been whipped than confronted with a pile of glutinous adhesive sago. The awful sentence that anything left of your helping should resurrect cold for breakfast, was grimly carried

out, and I used to be interned whole afternoons with platefuls at which my very gorge rose.

Children of to-day have no conception what ordeals of this description they escape now that any forcible feeding is the exception instead of the rule. From a hedonistic point of view, let us—in justice to our own infancy—conclude that they lose some glorious moments, since there is no longer sufficient motive for palpitating raids on that Holy of Holies, the housekeeper's cupboard; but, as far as their digestions are concerned, the reform is, I'm sure, a wholly beneficial one.

So much forbidden fruit automatically led to illicit overeating. One saved up pennies to buy trash—made a squirrel's granary and guzzled in bed to the destruction of previously scrubbed teeth.

Of course even now a certain proportion of possibly unwelcome nourishment must be consumed. Milk is in most families still considered a *sine qua non*, and some inconvenient children seem to have a natural dislike to it. Much can be done by judicious coaxing, and there is even scope for bluff. I remember a cunning mother who employed it to convert

wholesome objects of general unpopularity into coveted treats to be competed for. "Who has been a good enough boy to deserve the lovely skin on the top of this milk?" A great deal might be done in this way; far more than by awful allusions to that unfortunate "chubby lad" Augustus.

Dramatizing their dislikes to children by discussing them in their presence should be avoided, or more and more fancies may be adopted for the pleasure of hearing them remarked on—the extra attention being much appreciated. Above all, never let them hear opinions as to what disagrees with them, but just remove the danger without any comment. A child should take his digestion as a matter of course, not learn to feel a wan pride in any physical idiosyncrasy.

Equally a certain standard of table manners is, I hope, still universally aimed at. Mouths must not be wiped on tablecloths, heads scratched with forks, nor Dr. Johnson's example of how not to be a fool followed without due provocation. The fate of "fidgety Phil" must be remembered, and races over milk and sponge cakes are not to be encouraged Also—

without making a bore and a bogey of Mr. Gladstone and his thirty-two bites to the mouthful—some check must be applied to excessive bolting. The happiest children are still subjected to a fair degree of discipline, but a reasonable amount of irrelevant conversation and comfortable attitudes are now permitted at meals by wise parents. Elbows on the table is not an elegant position, but how difficult to be very rigid on this point when, at any assembly of mixed ages, there are sure to be some grown-up people indulging in the practice. To give a rebuked child the chance of pointing out its elders in "flagrant delict" is surely to afford it too great a treat; and, though children should by all means be expected to behave better at table than their elders, the gulf should not be too unnaturally wide.

Be sure that any directions you may give as to eating are clearly understood. I suffered much from misapprehending certain orders. The imperative "Don't eat with your front teeth" caused me untold worry and embarrassment. It was, of course, intended to correct an unbecoming habit of eating like a rabbit,

the front teeth usurping the work of the back ones as well as doing their own. I took it to mean that my front teeth were to take no part whatever in the proceedings, and my ensuing efforts to put all my food through the side of my mouth, instead of through the front door, occasioned intense discomfort and many scoldings.

There was also a sad mistake about asparagus. I was told never on any account to eat their stalks. Unfortunately I got just the wrong idea as to their two ends, and used conscientiously to chew the pale, hard stalks, leaving the succulent green heads untasted! Then the terrors I went through, thanks to exaggerated propaganda as to the dangers of swallowing the stones and pips of fruit. By all means tell your children to avoid them, but don't leave them under the impression that one slipping down will mean immediate appendicitis. Similarly, if I had been told that to swallow a piece of shot was not certain death, I would have been spared the agonized afternoon that followed my first helping of pheasant.

Children should be taught to take a proper pride in keeping the cloth clean, but to spread

a napkin in front of them is rather to suggest spills. They will consider themselves expected to be messy, and will probably not disappoint you.

I am glad to notice that the practice of making the one unfortunate child in the midst of elders say grace aloud, has for the most part been relinquished. This—a barbarity to a shy child—encouraged religion as little as it did digestion.

Each generation astonishes the next one by tales of its childhood. When we were expostulated with for stooping, our elders told us of how they were taught their erect carriage by means of holly beneath the chin and spiked chairs. To them the table rules imposed on us seemed strangely slack. The change between their manners and ours was as great as that between ours and the children of to-day. I suppose they, in their turn, will be astonished at their children's still further release from stiffness and restraint. But how, I wonder? Will their feet be allowed to rest on the table, and knives, forks and spoons be discarded in favour of their own "pickers and stealers"?

Much may be lost with the banishment of

formality from any sphere. No doubt there is now too little ceremony over meals, but I'm sure that, on the whole, they are, in the average family, far healthier and happier functions than were those at which the presiding parents were themselves the children.

V

IN "MOTHER'S DAY NURSERY"

"*The future destiny of the child is always the work of the mother.*"—NAPOLEON.

"MAY I go down to 'Mother's Day Nursery'?" This phrase—one that was naturally adopted by a child of three—conveys precisely the pleasurable degree of glamour with which the drawing-room should be invested. Strangeness and reassurance, excursion and safety are simultaneously suggested—something of the formality of a frontier with none of its frown. Children are naturally ritualistic, and that a certain sense of ceremony should be associated with "grown-up" precincts will greatly enhance the enjoyment of the time spent downstairs.

I do not mean that the drawing-room should, as in some houses, be a prohibited area except during one rigidly adhered to "children's hour," for which the passports of changed clothes and brushed hair are required. The very essence of motherhood is the inability to

go out of office. You cannot have hours on and off or claim a close season. Impossible to dole out rations of time and attention to clamouring children.

Like the water supply, a mother must consider herself as once and for all "laid on, hot and cold."

Ever at the beck and call of emergency, she must be always prepared to function in countless capacities. A first-aid ambulance—a court of appeal—a confessor—a collaborator—an audience—an umpire—a safe—an encyclopædia! These are some of the innumerable parts she must be ever ready to play.

But by all means let a certain ceremoniousness be observed towards the shrine of this Jill of all trades.

Muddy boots must be removed, messy trophies of outdoor adventure relinquished—some little deference paid to the change of surroundings.

Nothing is easier than to enlist a child's respect for a soft carpet and fragile furniture, and the pride of taking care of "Mother's toys," by refraining from the rompiest games, yields an enjoyment all its own. Let it be understood

that Mother comes upstairs to play your games and that you come down to learn hers. Don't try and make an inferior nursery of a room probably ill-adapted to bear-fighting. For the whole house to be Liberty Hall, is to deprive a child of many enjoyable nuances.

His sense of the appropriate can be most agreeably cultivated and a child's natural pride in being "trusted" will prove your best ally—making precautions seem privileges rather than annoyances. The most unassuming of drawing-rooms will easily inspire admiration and respect. Children are struck by its being so strangely different from the play-battered nursery, and they are, as a rule, very susceptible to pretty things.

I think what impressed me most of all as a child was the feel of a deep carpet to feet accustomed to the "no nonsense" of linoleum. So softly and sumptuously did it spread that I longed to take off my shoes and paddle in its pile.

There was the table covered with "Mother's toys"—a peculiarly privileged table—not like the nursery one, liable to be periodically cleared to make way for meals—since a special one

with wonderfully accomplished legs was always carried in for tea. And then there was the majestic charm of the shining silver kettle, in which you could see your own face so fascinatingly distorted. As for the enchanting work-box, with its regiments of shimmering reels of silks, no "on purpose toy" ever quite came up to it.

True, the books were pictureless, mechanical toys couldn't run on the floor, nor tops attempt to spin, but there were so many unfamiliar objects that were either "silky" or "shiny," and the curtains, falling in heavy folds, provided such wonderful hiding-places. "What a good cuckoo room!" as I heard a child say the other day.

Everything had its special place, and the pride of restoring a borrowed breakable treasure to its shrine ranked very high in the scale of coveted privileges. The prestige acquired by the temporary toy, which is too precious to be taken upstairs, however much you cry for it, will in the long run yield more pleasure than demoralizing concessions on this point—one which, by the way, is very apt to arise. The drawing-room must never come to be regarded

as a sort of nursery overflow, whence the children can carry off anything which takes their fancy.

On the same principle, though all the time they spend downstairs be really dedicated to the children, this fact need not be too apparent.

Mother and Father will be more appreciated if the children early realize that they are not merely a background to them, but mysterious beings, leading enthralling lives of their own. Occasional preoccupation and such words as "I must finish this important letter," thrilled me as though hinting that they were "moving about in worlds unrealized"—but worlds to which my own passage was already booked!

Is not the present tendency, perhaps, almost to over-insist on the fun and glory of childhood, and the misfortune and bathos of growing up? To give children the impression that the grown-up people have no object in existence save their welfare and entertainment, is dwarfing life to them by lowering their own horizon. By all means dramatize their present, but not at the expense of their own future. Glorify the flowers at their feet, but deny not the blueness of

distant hills, and let the prospect of growing up have something of the promised land.

"What is Daddie *for?*" (as I heard a two-year-old inquire) ably expresses the puzzled bewilderment of a child concerning the *raison d'être* of any one whose function towards himself was not apparent. Easy enough to see the object of nurse and the cook. Mother is either a makeshift for nurse or a standing treat, but what and why is this large strange being who is neither child nor servant?

By all means dramatize yourself to the children by occasional absorption in your own affairs. To ask a child to "keep as quiet as a mouse" can give him real pleasure. I remember enjoying the sense it gave me of assisting in mighty matters.

Actively to entertain children the whole time is in any case a mistake. For one thing, you thus miss the delights of watching their delicious spontaneous play. They are apt to be most entrancing when undisturbed by any impresario.

Some mothers, eager to have a success with their children, so succeed in their ambition "to haunt, to startle, and waylay" them, that

when bedtime comes their children go upstairs quivering with nerves, and stimulated out of all suitable sleepiness. But, however detached you may appear, your children's presence in the room must, in reality, never for an instant be forgotten. Remember their surprising imitative faculty, and never, by your own example, lower the standard of manners you wish to set. The "Please" and "Thank-you" code must be rigorously carried out, especially in addressing the children themselves.

Not only this, but a careful censorship must be exercised over your conversation with contemporaries. For listening purposes, you should always overrate a child's intelligence. However apparently engrossed with his bricks, he may carry up the strangest gobbets of gossip.

Be careful what you laugh at and whom you discuss, and remember how much worrying bewilderment can arise from unexplained idioms. The expression "So and so grows on one" used to cause me real mental distress! Besides, heedlessness of speech can lead to the most embarrassing practical results. I still remember stealthily creeping up to examine

the neck of a visitor I had heard alluded to as having "her head well-screwed on"; and asking her if she still "knew which side her bread was buttered, as Uncle said she did, when she married Cousin D." Another scene of sad confusion was when a child, rebuked for not shaking hands, excused itself by saying, " 'Fraid lady's hand burn, 'cos Mother said she was very 'hot stuff.' "

On no account omit to explain the convention of saying "Not at home," when they know you to be resting on the sofa. This worried my young conscience greatly, and I well remember contradicting the appalled butler's front-door statement, and triumphantly ushering the most unwelcome visitors into the presence of a horizontal mother.

I fear seeds of the sense of injustice (a plant of tropical growth) are often sown in a child's mind in the drawing-room owing to his meeting with different treatment to anything he is accustomed to upstairs. Never—because of its results—punish an action that would have passed unchidden in the nursery, or he will think "grown-ups" unreasonable and unjust.

Explain that particular things are valuable,

don't expect him to discriminate. For instance, since he was allowed to scribble on the —to him—far more attractive coloured picture-book upstairs, how could he know it was a crime to put the drab looking first edition to the same purpose?

Try not to treat him differently in different moods. This form of elementary justice requires much self-control, but what is even more difficult and important is to refrain from laughter on all occasions when it may either hurt feelings or encourage naughtiness. One untimely chuckle may have the most far-reaching quenching or inciting effects. Nothing like the laughter of "grown-ups"—its ridicule or applause—for stifling the flowers and fostering the weeds.

When the children come downstairs always assume them to be both good and reasonable, and express surprise, not resigned grievance, at any bad behaviour. Such phrases as "How naughty!" or "How stupid you are!" confirm and crystallize. "Why are you pretending to be naughty—or stupid?" "I can't play with you until you remember you are a good boy," are far more judicious.

Bedtime, that "Fancy's knell," is far too often a sad curtain to a happy scene—a halcyon evening ending in riot and disorder. It should not be too abrupt a summons. No order which is not intended to be firmly carried out should ever be given; but if you wish to avoid tears, do have the consideration to give a child a few minutes' warning to "come to" before he is torn away from a world of make-believe. You cannot tell how much you may be asking of him. His investments are invisible. Impossible to know to what extent his honour may be at stake. Give him time to kill his giant, or pull up the drawbridge. Let him satisfactorily close the episode, but encourage the idea of its being part of a serial game to be continued next time he "comes down to Mother's day nursery." Give him the delights of looking forward. The skilful mother knows how a child's cake may be kept as well as eaten, and for her children there should always be a to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow of delicious anticipation.

VI

VISITORS

"*Habits are at first cobwebs, at length cables.*"—OLD PROVERB.

To fly helter-skelter down the passage and burst "full of fun and gladness" into "Mother's day nursery," only to find the room frozen by the presence of strangers, was a reiterated shock of childhood. I never knew which was worse, to run into such an ambush—the sudden douche of disappointment quenching all one's bright hopes for the evening—or to be prewarned of the ordeal and come down prepared for the worst, pranked out for the "enemy" and coached in company manners.

On these occasions I remember my Nannie used to tie a piece of ribbon round my right wrist so that I shouldn't disgrace her by presenting the wrong hand for "How do you do?" One's troubles were not merely negative. Bad enough the cancelled programme, the postponed reading or game, but in addition to this what positive ordeals to be faced!

My first consuming dread was: "Should I

be kissed?" If so, would there be a moustache in it, or the kind of cold nose which went down your ear? I very soon realized that where there was one kiss, there was almost certain to be two. This cast a shadow over the whole interval between "How do you do?" and "Good-bye." You had, so to speak, to pay at both gates. Then there was a considerable risk of being hoisted on to an uncomfortable knee and subjected to a most disconcerting catechism. It is curious how quite intelligent and well-meaning "grown-ups" will cater to children with some half-dozen stock questions —each of which is calculated to put any child hopelessly out of ease.

"Shall I cut your curls off?"

"Would you like to come home with me?"

"Which do you like best, your father or your mother?"

"Are you jealous of your little brother?"

Such are the accustomed overtures. To greet a contemporary caller with the inquiries:

"What is your income?"

"Are you in love with your husband?"

"Do you dye your hair?"

would be in equally good taste.

Of course there were shining exceptions. Enchanting wizards and fairies, who not only made bunnies out of handkerchiefs and threw finger shadows on the walls, but burst your bond of shyness and actually talked to you in a normal voice. What a pentecostal effect they had, making you feel a fellow-creature instead of a dumb show.

But on the whole—since one must acquit them of ill-will—visitors displayed a strange lack of memory of their own childhood.

There is no greater triangular embarrassment than constantly pervades drawing-rooms in which parents, visitors and children meet to throw each other into confusion. Shyness, mutually given and taken, surges round the room and all parties appear at their worst.

The visitors, conscious of not showing to advantage, are at a loss how, without apparent irony, to compliment their hostess on the possession of children whom they have only seen disfigured—to the point of disguise—by the effect of their own presence; and the mother, bewildered and disappointed by the metamorphosis in the children she has so looked forward to exhibiting, is sadly hurt through

her love and vanity. How unaccountably quicksilver has turned into suet! He whose precocity is her pride, and who upstairs is a Niagara of talk, now requires to have each word surgically extracted. A catalepsy seems to have overtaken him. So completely is his "receiver off." Even their so lovely looks are mysteriously eclipsed. Petrified out of all their natural prettiness of movement, with colour and expression banished, they seem scarce recognizable.

As for the children, they feel quite as miserable as they look; the world has become an uncomfortable place in which Mother is no longer Mother, for they can be subconsciously disturbed by "nerves" in others long before they recognize them.

This too frequent state of general discomfort is really so unnecessary. As far as the visitors are concerned, the simplest decalogue would help to prevent such a caricature of a scene. A positive talent for child-tackling cannot be acquired, but, whatever the shortcomings, glaring sins of commission might at least be avoided. Here are a few elementary rules:

"Don't kiss at first sight."

Or say:

"Shall I toss you up to the ceiling?"

"Don't make personal remarks."

"Don't talk what you think to be baby language."

"Don't ask perfunctory questions or refer to the occasion when you saw a child in its bath, and never, never rush your fences by at once pulling a face—flopping on all fours, or barking like a dog. 'You're no one wot I know,' was a well-deserved reproof I heard administered to an over-familiar visitor."

For mothers the situation is far more subtle and complex. Their dangers are largely due to the promptings of vanity, for they are too inclined to regard their children as illustrations of themselves, and to hunger for their charms to receive an immediate ovation.

Seeing their children show to disadvantage is so painful that, in their agitation, they are apt to throw fuel on the furnace of embarrassment and distort them more and more.

Or, in their efforts to prevent their children thus falling flat, they may even commit so grave a sin of self-indulgence as to quote a child in its presence or try to make it do a

"turn." Some mothers, indeed, treat their children no better than a gramophone, and what can only be called "baby-baiting" is far too common. The golden rule is never in any way to exploit your child for your own or any one else's amusement, but, for the sake of getting a laugh, one sees it infringed to the extent of urging him to do or say precisely the things for which he would rightly be punished upstairs. Rudeness is produced as an accomplishment, a display made of disobedience—a performance of passion!

Children are the best toys in the world, but they must never be deliberately wound up. What rods mothers can pickle for their own backs by making pets of comic defects!

One form of fatuity to be avoided is that of trying to explain away your child's temporary eclipse of beauty, charm and intelligence. Children are variable as the weather, and their faculty for letting you down on special occasions is inexpressibly annoying; but, any comment on it sounds as fatuous as does the explanation, "I can't play to-day," at tennis or at golf, and carries just about as much weight.

Don't say "He's not looking his best this

evening," "Her hair curls beautifully when the weather's decent," or "I think she will be pretty when she has 'cut her nose,' as Lord Chesterfield said of a snub-nosed baby." Such explanations are futile, besides suffocating the children in self-consciousness. You must face the fact that children for the most part will not wear their fascination on their sleeves. Display of that unique and intoxicating charm, so well known to you and Nannie in the nursery, can never be counted on. Cherish no such hope; but, by skilful handling, your children should escape acute misery from visitors and attain to a certain standard of manners. Remember, nothing is more often suggested than shyness, so never say "I hope you are not going to be a shy little boy to-day."

Ordinary surface manners of the "How do you do?" "Please," and "Thank you" description should be so continuously instilled that they become automatic as Guards' drill, and then they can be relied on not to desert in a crisis.

The great mistake is to have distinct family and company manners, taken on and off like gloves. They must adhere like skin, and par-

ents and nurse must set the example of their inevitability. No holiday from the ideal must ever be claimed, for if bad manners are ever accepted like fate and excused on account of tiredness or shyness, a bad precedent is at once established. Imply that the observation of the little forms of ceremony is a privilege of "grown-up glory," not an infliction on childhood.

As for crippling shyness—far more often due to egotism than to modesty—it must never be accepted as a natural disability. Its conquest is a necessary form of self-control. Explain that to overcome it is to win a victory, just as much as conquering a hill. Personify it as a dragon, or what you will, and fight it inch by inch.

Wrongly instructed manners may increase self-consciousness, but properly instructed ones will certainly diminish it. Teach children—what after all is the foundation of all good manners—to try and put themselves in the place of others, and to make it their aim to set people at their ease. Make it quite clear that good manners are not intended for their own adornment (a form of "showing off"—as I

have heard children describe them), but entirely for the comfort of others—in fact, not observed to gain approval, but to make the world a pleasanter place. No fear of making them "mechanical," but by keeping up a certain amount of ceremony in the drawing-room the encounter with visitors will become less of an ordeal and each success will make the next occasion easier.

. . . . . .

Besides finding "Mother's day nursery" under enemy occupation, there was the alternative ordeal equally straining to manners of having one's own territory invaded by contemporaries.

Entertaining chosen friends to tea was, of course, a great treat, but all little strangers were not necessarily either pleasing or pleased.

Certainly to be taken out calling with Mother and precipitated, all unedited, into a strange nursery, there to be marooned so long as drawing-room talk flourished, was not always a pleasing experience. Some nurses were kind, and would take off your shyness with your hat and coat. Others, scarcely concealing their annoyance at the disturbance, left you without

a helping hand amongst tantalizing toys and silent or aggressively interrogative children.

Parents naturally like their children to choose their play-fellows from the families of their own friends, but they must be prepared to find them prefer the company of the charges of their nurse's friends, and of strangers met at classes.

Grown-up people are too inclined to assume that all children are mutual treats—that there is a Freemasonry of years. As a matter of fact, the young are often very discriminating, and quite liable to fall, not in love, but in hate. Between some, any discussion—even if only as to whether blue or red, apple pie or apple pudding be preferred—inevitably leads to quarrelling.

If little uninvited visitors are brought into the nursery, nurse must see to it that her children early acquire the ideals of hospitality. They must try and make their visitors feel at home—give them the freedom of their toys, and realize that it is not compatible with good manners, as hosts and hostesses, to seize the opportunity—so easy on your own ground—of showing off. Let the visitors choose the games. Don't allow the home team to insist on playing

their set of "Who Knows"—all the answers to which they have learnt by heart,—or Hide-and-Seek, where they know all the lairs. That way lie cheap scores and undeserved humiliations.

At one time, in the prime of long-leggedness, I happened to excel at the high jump. The advent of any unfortunate little girl was shamelessly seized on as an occasion for self-glorification. A jumping competition was suggested, and the whole household summoned to applaud the triumph of the hostess and the mortification of the guest. I was also allowed to terrify children by taking them for personally conducted tours over the roof of the house on which, from long practice, I myself was as much at home as a cat.

For the children who are visiting, the rules are obvious though not always easy to enforce. They should never either audibly complain or covet. Looting must never be allowed; no wretched host made to surrender a toy because a spoilt visitor has cried for it. Tears (not "idle" these, but industrious) as a means to an end should never triumph, least of all when they must turn on the tears of others. To return from the invaders to those who suffer

siege, never forget to congratulate the good host as well as to censure the bad; and, if possible, avoid introducing young visitors into your nursery without any warning. It is only fair to give your children a little time in which to mobilize their manners.

VII

READING ALOUD

"Why should we strive with cynic frown
To knock their fairy castle down?"

ELIZA COOK.

AMONG the many good turns children may do their parents, I know none better than the delight given by their enjoyment of reading aloud, and to take down some well-loved book and hold them spellbound is undoubtedly one of the supreme pleasures of motherhood. Is it not almost the best instance of their blessed *re*Open Sesame gifts, the way in which the upturned flower-faces, with eyes aflare and quivering lips, are as a magic carpet on which you are wafted back into the enchanted region of your own childhood? Magic is restored to the wands of the old wizards, the doors of the prison-house burst open, and once more you travel in the "realms of gold." Add to this the pleasures of the priestess—the feeling of, so to speak, handing on the torch; and then

gratefully acknowledge the extent of your debt to the obliging child at your knee.

Remember he might have been one of those children one hears about (I have never met them) who are in this respect complete non-conductors, refuse to sit still to be read to, or remain apathetically unresponsive to all the triumphs of fancy and fun.

I doubt whether there has ever been a story-proof child. Under such a disappointment, I confess it would be hard to remain philosophical. But I cannot help thinking that the supply depends upon the demand. The mother, to whom it is convenient that her children should have a taste for being read to, must indeed be incompetent if she fail to inspire it.

Some people regard reading aloud as an injurious form of spoon-feeding, and think that its practice prevents children acquiring the habit of reading to themselves. There seems to me just about as much risk of their not helping themselves to food when hungry, owing to having been fed by others whilst they were babies.

As a matter of fact, it is far better that quite young children should not read to themselves a

very great deal. In going through certain books, companionship will be very necessary to them. Remember that, to an imaginative child, reading is to all intents and purposes *direct experience* (Did one not cry because a book was finished?)—not a method of passing the time, or of exercising a scarcely-born critical faculty.

He will actually pass through the adventures related, and it is not fitting that he should do so alone. In reading certain episodes he will need, so to speak, to have his hand held quite as much as if he were traversing a dark forest. Just as well send him out of doors alone, as encourage him to read some of the most palpitating passages to himself.

If you are not with him on the occasion of his being frightened or over-excited, you will be unable to apply any timely antidote to his nerves. Recognized alarms are fairly easy to allay, it is the unsuspected ones that may do so much harm. Besides, so large a part of happiness as is experienced through the delights of books, should surely, to some extent, be shared between parents and children. Nothing more becoming to a mother than the halo of asso-

ciation worn by the grown-up person who initiates children into their best-loved books, the gratitude owed to the author—whose name they ignore—going out to the reader. What an undying glamour was imparted by one's favourite fairy stories, to her who read them!

And then, from the practical point of view, it is such a wonderful solution for the "children's hour." One cannot forever be playing at Blind Man's Buff or "Let's pretend" games; and sitting still is often devoutly to be wished for. Besides which, reading can be so well combined with drawing, needlework or any other enjoyable handicraft.

For the sake of your grandchildren, each child should himself be encouraged to read out for a little every day. The capacity to read aloud even tolerably is too rare, and should be cultivated early.

With older children, an excellent family occupation is reading a Shakespeare play in turns. There are two different ways of setting to work. Either the characters are carefully allotted, or else things are left to chance, and you each read a speech in rotation. Both systems have drawbacks. Under the first it

is not always easy to decide who is to accept the minor parts; under the second, those who like the sound of their own voice are tempted to try and skip the wretched single line falling to their share, in order to secure the coming purple patch. A competent president is required, but there is no better way of combining reading and companionship.

In reading to children, an ardent mother's temptation will be to anticipate and—instead of lingering over each phase—to, as it were, waste fruit by eating it unripe. Many, for instance, through excess of loyalty, prematurely stride into Scott, or dash into Dickens, running the risk of instilling very obstinate prejudices by thus forcibly feeding a child with unappreciated books. Owing to this, bugbears are often made of those which with a little waiting, would have been first favourites.

You must have patience, and not try to drag a child out of enjoyable phases natural to his age by condemning the books he adores. Better, for the most part, to leave him undisturbed in his tastes. Nothing hurts one's feelings so much as a thoughtless sneer from a respected "grown-up" at some beloved story

or character. Children made so shy of banter —so accustomed to sarcasm as to conceal their admiration, are robbed of delight without being helped towards discrimination. To a small child, the author's words are sometimes merely the bricks with which to build castles of his own; and to try and force precocious discrimination is often only to bewilder and baulk him.

By all means remove books you consider unwholesome or not worth while, but better not disturb his enjoyment of those he *is* allowed by analysing them, any more than you would make him self-conscious about the food set before him.

Never be in a hurry to impose your own sense of humour on a child—to him so very far from being the most important sense. Forbear to worry him with any such incomprehensible phrase as "false sentiment," and remember how much children, left to themselves, enjoy a good stout moral. Don't deride it, however blatant. They appreciate a didacticism which seems too heavy for us.

Not only must you be tolerant of your child's likes, but also you must be forgiving of his

possible inability to enjoy the very books to which you have most looked forward to introducing him. Above all, never fall into the prevailing sin of reading him "potted" classics. Some, in their eagerness to introduce their children to such fascinating characters as Captain Silver, Rob Roy, or Sidney Carton, hurry them into false familiarity devoid of intimacy by buying those popular publications of Scott, Dickens and Stevenson in a nutshell. Not only is this training as bad as encouraging children to eat jam without bread, but it must also spoil the first real encounter. Some parents, wishing to spare their children's feelings, avoid stories with sad endings; but, owing to their love of sensationalism, it is impossible to predict *what* will distress them. They are spasmodically sentimental and callous, and though I have seen bitter tears shed over the death of the hero of Miss Ewing's *Story of a Short Life*, these tears were far sooner dried than were those of disappointment I saw shed the other day over Abraham's reprieve from having to kill his only son Isaac. "But why *not?* the knife was all ready."

There is acute disagreement as to the ad-

visability of reading good poems to young children. Some poetry-devotees see a danger of making their favourites hackneyed before they can be understood by pouring them into half-open ears. In their dread of impairing future enjoyment by what they consider an unfair introduction, likely to instil prejudice, they limit their children to narrative poems, or to those written in conscious condescension. They are as much inclined to postpone the pleasures of poetry as they are to be precipitate with prose.

Is not this precisely the wrong way about? If the sense of a prose narrative cannot be followed, it is read to little purpose, but it must never be forgotten that the first appeal of poetry—own sister to music—is to the *ear*, and, through it, direct to the emotions. Children are naturally very susceptible to rhythm; they love the lilt of measured words, and can revel in the music of sound as an end in itself. Experiments prove that they not only enjoy listening to poetry in an unknown tongue, but that they can respond to its emotional appeal, seeming to be so sensitive to the sense conveyed by mere sound, as to be able involuntarily to

guess at its purport. Their natural ear for poetry can be cultivated with great increase of enjoyment, and therefore poems should be selected for them for their beauty of form and not on account of their subject.

That they do not know what a poem "means" is no matter, so long as they do not definitely *mis*understand it, but—without bothering as to the sense—just revel in the sheer sound and its inevitable suggestiveness. They should be allowed to listen in a "wise passiveness," not worried to explain, or even pressed with unsolicited explanations. One's sympathies go out to the child who said, "Mother, I think I should understand, if only you wouldn't explain."

Don't try and make the poems you read to a child suggest the same ideas to him that they do to you. You will have quite sufficient common ground in listening to the music, seeing the picture, and feeling the mysteriousness, without any insistence on "getting the message."

The determination to have them understand what they read leads to so many mistakes in the choosing of poetry for children. The es-

sential thing is that their sense of beauty of form should be cultivated, and so many narrative poems are just tales in verse, not poetry—mere jingle devoid of any true music.

In his admirable book, *The Rudiments of Criticism*, Mr. Lamborn writes: "Children like stories, and so it is assumed that narrative verses are the best for them. Thus, on the one hand, plays of Shakespeare as *stories* together with Miss Heman's stories in verse, are selected for them to study; and, on the other hand, "Kubla Khan," "L'Allegro," "The Remote Bermudas," "A Dream of the Unknown," "The Highland Reaper," are neglected because they are supposed to have no childish interest. These are fundamental errors.

Children like other things besides stories, and one of them is *poetry* for its mystery, for its music and pictures, and the sensuous enjoyment they bring. . . .

"I do not, of course, mean that we should read 'Venus and Adonis' or the 'Decameron' to children, any more than we should give bryony berries to babies, simply because they are beautiful. But I do mean very decidedly that we should choose our children's poems for

their beauty of form first, and only negatively on account of their matter."

I feel certain Mr. Lamborn is right. Nearly all children are naturally susceptible to what we vaguely call "magic" in poetry. Surely they should be given the chance of "Kubla Khan" before they are condemned to "Casabianca."

Those who persist in the opinion that lyrics are better left until later, should at least fully avail themselves of the best ballads, than which there is no more wholesome or better-loved fare. Nearly all children delight in their simple tales and romantic suggestiveness, and the frequent repetition of the words seems to hold an almost hypnotic fascination for them.

However impatient to know "what comes next," children should be read to quite slowly. Their minds very easily get out of breath, and to drag them pell-mell through too many adventures and emotions in one evening is over-agitating. They should be encouraged to chew the cud, to gloat over one episode rather than rush on to the next. I expect the usual pace of the delivery has something to do with the undeniable fact that nearly all children prefer having a story told them, to being read aloud to.

To keep possession of so great a passport to delight as an enthralling story, by resolutely forbidding that the drawing-room book be carried upstairs, is quite fair play. It is a monopoly a mother should claim, and a book, lasting for weeks, and the return to which is looked forward to at each good-night, makes an ideal family experience and memory. There could be no better way of spending the last half-hour of a child's long day; but it must be remembered never to break off, with the art of the serial, at the critical moment, leaving the heroine unrescued and villainy triumphant.

Untie the urgent knots, smooth down the situation, and send the listener off to peaceful sleep "in lap of legends old."

VIII

CONDEMNED TO TOWN

"It is worth living in London surely, to enjoy the country when you get to it."—THACKERAY.

MANY mothers are deeply distressed at having to relinquish their ideal of a country upbringing for children; but, since the bread-winner is tethered to some city, and two establishments are impossible, they are reluctantly compelled to consign their family to a town home.

Themselves country bred, they feel that in so doing they are cutting them off from a part of childhood's birthright of loveliness and liberty, and handicapping them in the acquisition of health and happiness. They sigh farewell to their cherished dream of bronzed, barefoot, open-air young Titans growing in sun and shower. Haunted by the phrase "city sparrows," they picture their children breathing soot, drinking adulterated milk, wearing gloves, "cribbed, cabined, confined," and hopelessly out of touch with nature.

They foresee them growing up to associate milk with cans in rattling carts instead of with cows in fields of clover, apples with crowded shops rather than with loaded trees, and animals with smug domesticity instead of with romantic wildness.

They anticipate reduced growth, subdued spirits and precocious sophistication—bodies and souls, so to speak, soot-smirched instead of dew-drenched.

Who shall gainsay that the advantages of being brought up in the country are indeed very great?

To love one particular portion of earth's loveliness with that passion only felt towards the home of childhood, is amongst the luxuries of life—seeming, indeed, to give a firm planting to the feet, a balance, standard and tradition almost amounting to a certain serenity of soul.

For a boy there is no education like being given the freedom of the farm or of the village smithy; and, in having somewhere to keep your own rabbits, and in feeding the hen that lays your breakfast, there lies a satisfaction difficult to put into words.

Wordsworth-loving mothers grieve that their

children should be surrounded by houses instead of by hills, and fall asleep to the noise of traffic instead of to the music of running water.

"And she shall lean her ear in many a secret place,
Where rivulets dance their native round.
And Beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face."

Are their children's faces to be bereft of the beauty instilled by nature's gentle influence, and they themselves to grow up ignorant of her "breathing balm"—"the silence and the calm of mute insensate things"?

But much, very much of this tender concern is uncalled for. Without questioning the advantages of the country, there are, it must be conceded, from a practical point of view, a great many compensations for town life.

To begin with, so far as health and happiness are concerned, I'm sure no mother need worry as to the influence of a London home. (I take London, for example, but the same arguments apply to any other large city.)

Naturally the year should be broken by a visit to the country, and, if possible, by another one to the sea. August in London is certainly

undesirable; but, after all, children whose permanent home is in the country will also be the better for a change of air in the course of the year.

As to supplies, it is the rather shameful truth that London is the easiest place in which to be sure of securing clean milk, and, of course, its water is admirable. Again so far as actual climate goes, there is nothing whatever to complain of in London. Statistics will bear this out as well as Nannies and doctors, and you have only to look into one of the big parks to convince yourself. There you can see a glorious array of rounded limbs, and sparkling eyes in countenances ruddy as David's, hear boisterous shouts, and watch such romping as no sea or mountain air could make more rollicking.

I think some of us are inclined to confuse London—the place—with the life we lead in it. In its geographical position and natural conditions there is nothing to make us feel tired or teased. Children are not subjected to any of the fever and fret of grown-up town life. With the blissful concentration of their age, they are absorbed in the moment, not poor preoccupied

slaves to engagement-book and the telephone.

Grown-up people crave for silence, greenery and open skies to soothe strained nerves. Children, however much they would delight in country joys, have no exasperations from which they long for relief, and for all their appreciation of streams, trees and fields they are probably without any corresponding aversion to traffic, smoke and crowds.

Naturally some districts in London are too dingy and cooped up for children. Houses overlooking roaring streets or far from any park or garden are unsuitable, for it is very inconvenient not to be within easy distance of the nearest playground.

Not that walks in streets are not very entertaining to children. There is much to see and hear, particularly on the days when the so-greatly-to-be-envied workmen are "playing" with the road. How unfairly privileged I used to think them, and how one longed to join in their frolics with pickaxe and lime! Were they not even allowed to play with flames. Then buses, shops and policeman are a very long time in becoming commonplace; there is always a sporting chance of a fire-engine;

and, trying to avoid treading on the cracks in the pavement is one of the very best games to play with yourself.

But if very many streets have to be gone through, and several critical crossings traversed, short legs will be tired before their destination is reached, and it will be time to start home again as soon as the hoops have really got bowling.

In a provincial town it will probably be best to have a house rather on its fringe; in London, to be really close to one of the big parks—"the lungs of London"—will make the whole difference to daily life. Take Regent's Park. What could be better for children than a house actually inside it? Nurses may prefer Hyde Park, where the smartest prams parade, but, besides being in the best air, Regent's Park is far more like real country, and allows of the most untrammelled romping. Football matches take the place of mob-oratory, and it abounds in delights, from bread-gobbling ducks and friendly grey squirrels, to the distant jungle-roar from the Zoo. Though no inevitable noise of traffic disturbs the senses, while greenery predominates and silence prevails at night,

yet you are not in the least cut off from the town, and, whenever the spirit moves, can emerge into all the glamour of streets, shops and buses.

Besides the advantages of having both the companionship of other children and the doubtful pleasures of sight-seeing always available, another great compensation to London mothers is the relative facility of education.

That recurring difficulty, the resident governess, is solved, for daily schools or excellent classes of every kind are within easy reach, and children can thus, without premature banishment from home, benefit by having expert teachers for various subjects, instead of one woman wearied by a monotonous life.

Again, there is the indisputable irony that it is far easier for London children to become proficient at most out-of-door things. Year after year country children vainly wait in winter for the pond to bear—in summer for it to be considered sufficiently warm for bathing; whereas in London, at a very small expense, they may quickly become expert swimmers and skaters.

So far from necessarily growing up in igno-

rance of nature, many children will appreciate its wonders and beauties all the more consciously, owing to coming on them with something of a shock instead of having them always spread before their eyes and taken as a matter of course.

On an occasional visit to the country there is no child with soul so dead as not to be enraptured both by the open sky above his head and the soft ground beneath his feet, and with all the birds that sing and the creatures that crawl. He will be as greatly excited at the spectacle of cows and sheep and other commonplaces of the landscape as country children are by traffic, policemen and shop windows; and rural noises are likely to be more disturbing to his slumbers than is the din of a town to unaccustomed ears.

He will want to conquer every hill, climb every tree, pick every flower he sees; and no day will be long enough for his "enterprises of great moment."

His astonishment stimulates his curiosity, and, if his eager questions are answered, he is likely to learn far more of the names of animals, birds and plants than the natives of the soil.

In a blaze of excitement he may well absorb more wood-lore in a week than might an apathetic rustic in a lifetime.

So whatever the more subtle influences of a country home, it must be admitted that health and education flourish without it, while spirits may certainly remain undismayed.

However sad at being herself condemned to town, no mother need regard it as any impediment to the joyful upbringing of children perfectly satisfied and satisfying.

IX

LEARNING TO READ

"Well may the bairn bless
That him to book sette."
WILLIAM LANGLAND.

TEACHING children their first lessons makes one wonder how some people ever managed to master the difficulties of reading. Perhaps it was that, in this initial undertaking, they exhausted their faculties and expended all their energies. Certainly many of them never seem to give any second proof of possessing the necessary faculties.

"How soon do you think I should begin teaching my child to read?"

Most mothers ask this question, and many are bewildered by the conflicting answers they receive from both doctors and teachers, for they are sure to be assailed with theories of every kind, and may well be frightened by the sad warnings eager propagandists will quote.

On the whole, the present tendency is more and more to postpone the start of education,

and then to dally longer and longer over its kindergarten phase of slenderly disguised play —the silver coating to the pill growing yearly thicker.

Tender parents shudder with horror at the idea of the curriculum that used to be imposed on eighteenth-century children. They, poor precocities, used to be well advanced in Latin and Greek by an age at which we still hesitate to put our children even at their first fence of the alphabet.

Certainly we of this generation have shied very far in the other direction.

Many different motives are given for postponing the attack on Learning. Some parents dread precocious bookworms and—so far from encouraging any study—definitely prefer their children to read in nothing but, what they call, the "Book of Nature" until, say, the age of seven.

They are, I suppose, so afraid of their children being distracted from finding "books in the running brooks" that they think it best to make all printed ones contraband?

Naturally no one wishes a child to spend those first brimming years of life with his nose

in a book, but surely there must be ways of moderating reading, short of enforcing total abstinence?

Other parents have no objection to their children reading—would even welcome so safe and quiet an occupation, but they have been warned by some child-doctor against "forcing" the infant mind.

Obviously any premature real *strain* is bad, but it is not so easy to judge what particular form of exercise may cause it. Impossible to prevent a child's automatic use of his brain. How can one even know, far less control, his spontaneous exertions?

When everything is so new, without any actual teaching, he must inevitably be learning from morning to night—continuously absorbing ideas and jumping at conclusions.

I'm sure that to many an active-minded child, to be set down to so relatively mechanical a task as reading, will prove far less exhausting than the make-believe otherwise ceaselessly indulged in.

Excitement is tiring, and one never knows how much a child may be taking out of himself through his imagination. The wear and tear

of all the "Let's pretend" games must certainly be very considerable. Think how many palpitating adventures lively children will cram into one glorious hour of crowded life.

During the few minutes I recently spent with a three-year-old, we "fell down drains—swallowed fishes—were gulped by whales"—and the climax was "Let's pretend we're on a tiger, and he's killing us!" All this, no doubt, was quite an everyday programme.

Surely, in such a case, lessons would be a comparative rest, so to speak, temporarily putting the engine on railway lines and thus economizing energy. To direct activity is not to increase it.

But, according to some doctors, it is precisely this claiming of concentration which is injurious. Forced attention, they urge, is the strain, not activity.

It is, of course, impossible to generalize—so much depending on the individual, and each mother must observe the effect of lessons on her own child's nervous system. In any case the first ones should be very short—not more than ten minutes at a time; but, in my opinion, at three or at four years old, a normal child

will benefit all round by learning his letters, and if he begins at that age, by the time he is six he should, without any undue pressing, be able to read quite easy books.

After all, reading is the indispensable first step to all education, and to defer its attainment over-long, is heavily to handicap a child in the course he must run.

The conquest of the Alphabet itself can be carried out in the most playful way; in fact, I have seen many children of three—blissfully unconscious of playing to their own or to any one else's advantage—preferring "letters" to any other game. By being given another of those large wooden block letters every few days, they gradually, without any effort, get to know the shapes of all the twenty-six by sight, and then they are generally very amused at recognizing their old friends in the pages of books.

It is indeed extraordinary what delight some children get out of letters, and how they will be for ever seeing their forms in other objects—especially in morsels of food. A very favourite game is to bite pieces of bread into the shapes of various letters. By the way, the alphabet can be got in chocolate biscuits—a most en-

chanting provision for those who favour the school of "Play while you learn" and "Learn while you play." The great delight—a reward for recognizing the letters—is to be allowed, by accurate bites, to convert a B into a P, or an E into an F.

A macaroni alphabet is also provided to enliven chicken broth.

Isolated letters are, however, only child's play, and it is after the mastery of the alphabet that the real trouble begins. It is now no longer possible entirely to camouflage education as play, neither is it desirable after five years old. The time has now come for EFFORT to be taught as an end in itself. That the child should learn to tackle difficulty, is more important than his acquiring any particular fraction of knowledge in question, just as the exercise of walking to a particular place may be your real object in going there, and to drive you to your destination would be to defeat your purpose.

There is now no necessity to persevere in trying to make out that lessons are all play, for children will so quickly imbibe the idea of "The labour we delight in physics pain."

Fashions in education vary almost as much as in dress, and there are a great many different methods of teaching reading—roughly dividing themselves into two systems, by one of which it is taught by the ear and the other by the eye, and it should be quite easy to discover to which method a child is most responsive.

"Reading without tears," or "Tears without reading," as I used to call it—though good of its kind, is antiquated. The resemblance claimed between letters and objects seems strained, and all but the most abject children soon weary of its fatuous and disconnected sentences. Such incredible statements as "I met ten pigs in a gig"—"I met ten figs in a gig," "I met ten wigs in a gig," cannot hold their attention, and supply no motive for struggling to decipher the succeeding lines. No, there should be some sequence in the very first reading book. It is quite easy, out of monosyllables, to construct some simple tale, which will keep the children interested from page to page, and excellent primers of this kind are now provided in Standards I., II. and III.

The extent to which children vary in over-

coming the difficulties of reading is quite extraordinary.

Encouraging precedents abound for the most extreme degrees of both quickness and of slowness, and no mother should attach much importance to the pace of progress.

One hears of infant prodigies, who seemed to have read by instinct without ever actually being taught. They will tell you they cannot remember the process of learning, or will claim to have taught themselves by means of the names written over shops and so on. Others, very likely ultimately to be in no way their intellectual inferiors, experience the utmost difficulty—their strange slowness being the despair of their parents. The explanation may often lie in unsuspected eye-trouble, and an oculist should always be consulted. How often has a child been unjustly accused of stupidity and indolence when all that was required was a pair of spectacles.

On the whole, the most gifted children are probably, as a rule, not the easiest to teach to read.

A lively imagination is very often a distraction, the more pedestrian faculty of concentra-

tion being what is required for the conquest of words and sentences. Equally a very good memory may prove a stumbling-block—giving the child a tendency to learn each particular word by heart, instead of getting at the general principle, which would enable him to negotiate new words.

I have found those cardboard letters, used in the word-making and word-taking game, very helpful; constructing words with them being an agreeable change to poring over the baffling page.

The great thing is to avoid discouragement, and, when they have made a little progress, a good plan is to give the pupil some favourite passage almost known by heart. The easy recognition of words—half read, half remembered, will be found flattering and stimulating.

Later on all unknown words encountered should be copied out—reading, writing and spelling thus advancing hand in hand.

It is often very difficult to know whether a child's progress—its rapidity or slowness—is most to be attributed to mental or to psychological qualities. An industrious child will outstrip an indolent one of far greater natural

ability, and, quite apart from either capacity or energy, there are so many possible incentives and impediments to be taken into consideration.

One child is naturally competitive, and it is the desire to excel others which spurs him on. Another has such an appetite for books, that the ambition to be able to read them to himself drives him to similar strenuous efforts.

On the other hand, some children are alike indifferent to credit and to books, and, seeing no intrinsic reward for uncongenial labour, have no will to learn, and can be neither bribed nor shamed into effort.

Others again may love books but, being read to as much as they like, see no reason to exert themselves. These it should be easy to starve into learning by cutting off all reading aloud.

Then there are some children who will be mainly actuated by an amiable desire to please their teacher. They work for smiles and appreciative words, and, in their case, care must be taken not to overdrive a willing horse.

One way and another the varying degrees of goodwill children bring into the schoolroom is quite astonishing.

Some, inclined to be on the defensive, are

even suspicious of the first playful preliminaries, seeming to regard the acquisition of any knowledge as something which may thereafter be used against them.

Perhaps their reluctance to learn is actuated by the same prudent principle on which (foreseeing hours spent in looking out other people's trains) one refrains from learning the use of the Bradshaw.

The progress of such children will be apt to resemble that of the donkey. How tiring it is incessantly to use the goad! And if they are neither amiable nor ambitious, where, in their case, is one to find the proverbial carrot?

Many children, on the contrary, from the very outset, feel themselves to be forging a weapon for their own use. These it will be delightful to teach, for, having the sense to realize that they are learning for their own sakes, and, by present effort, purchasing untold delights, they put all their hearts into their reading, rising gallantly at new words like a horse at a fence.

X

GOING FOR A WALK

"I heard the skylark warbling in the sky!
And I bethought me of the playful hare,
Even such a happy child of Earth am I;
Even as these blissful creatures do I fare;
Far from the world I walk and from all care."

WORDSWORTH.

THERE is no better test of a grown-up person's capacity to be the companion of children than his or her ability to conduct a walk in such a way as to make them anxious to repeat the experience; and, in engaging a governess to look after those whose home is in the country, it would be much more important to satisfy yourself as to this point, than to find out how good a degree she had taken.

"Let's go for a walk." What varying prospects lay in those words, and how very differently the invitation fell on your ears according to who happened to be the speaker. There were those who had the art to turn a walk into an adventure, giving you thrills as of an explorer, and to go through familiar

country under their guidance was like walking into a romantic picture, hitherto only seen flat on the wall.

On the other hand, with others (the hopelessly "grown-up" in the invidious sense of the word) the outing was made a mere business of —the dreary means to the uninspiring end of exercise. You went so far and no farther along a road, turning back, if you please, not because you were tired, or the way dull, but because it was *time*!

The right kind of "grown-up," so far from just labelling them, dramatized all the trees and flowers till they became creatures with faces and personalities instead of merely the owners of tiresome names which you were expected to remember.

In their company, what enchanting shapes were seen in sailing clouds, and what meaning heard in the song of birds.

"Oh, fret not after knowledge, I have none
And yet my song comes native with the warmth.
Oh, fret not after knowledge, I have none
And yet the evening listens."

Then, what a joy it was to be out of doors with some one who understood the game of

trying to reach the horizon, agreed that to climb a stile was better than to go through a gate, saw the fun of wet feet, and even sympathized with your passionate desire to get lost.

With them no kind of weather was without its charm; they knew exactly the right moment to suggest unbuttoning your coat, and when it would be nice to sit on a gate and eat the "iron rations" (they never forgot to bring) of chocolate and biscuits, whilst they told you a story or sketched out the game of make-believe to be played on the way home.

If the return was long, they knew the wonderful relief to tiredness found in walking in step, and every stimulated stride seemed to fling you towards your tea.

But, with the wrong sort of person—those who dragooned instead of dramatizing—how you prayed that it might rain, so that you could stay at home with your paint-box rather than be dragged out for, what they always called, a "nice walk."

Such people, apparently wearing invisible blinkers, would always obstinately keep up precisely the same rate of progression, whether it happened to be hot or cold, or whatever the

attractions of the surroundings. A uniform pace being expected from you as well, fingers were very liable to be painfully pressed in an unsympathetic grasp and your arm well-nigh dragged from its socket. Whatever the season, and no matter what it was you happened to be passing, you must not linger. There might be a sheep being shorn—a bird's nest—a crackling iced puddle—loaded blackberry-bushes—a hollow tree—or even running water. Never mind. Out would ring the ruthless words, "Do not lag behind."

There was no day in the year on which they did not either grumble at the dust or the mud, and complain of the weather—taking rain as a personal affront. So soon as it ceased to be too cold, it became much too hot, and, in their company, the road really did seem to wind up hill all the way.

Worst of all (would anything be more absurd?) they could see no sense in your picking flowers you did not want to carry for yourself. They firmly refused to take either toadstools or icicles home for you, and would never notice if you had a stone in your shoe or a stitch in your side. Perhaps they completely ignored

the face of the earth—it might have been an undesirable acquaintance they wished to cut; if they had been blind and deaf they couldn't have taken less notice of its sights and sounds, and as for its smells they were only conscious of the unpleasant ones. Or else (and these were worse) they would try and turn the whole landscape into a lesson book, by wearying you with what they called "Nature study," in reality the mere dry-as-dust recital of names, followed by an embarrassing examination of the inattentive.

Not that natural history, even down to the learning of names, is not wonderfully attractive and repaying to children. Directly their interest and wonder in nature has been really excited, they will themselves clamour for information, and there is no better way of enlivening the daily walk than the intelligent pursuit of natural history. But don't *begin* with unsolicited lists of names and classifications. You must stimulate children's appetite for knowledge before you can hope for its assimilation.

Once they have learnt the delights of observation, and really begin sensitively to perceive the delicate beauties and infinite varieties of all the different wild flowers, they themselves will

want to know what to call them, and will ask you for the right labels.

A favourite method is to keep a botany book, containing drawings of all the wild flowers; and when a new specimen is found, brought home and carefully identified, to allow the child to colour the picture of it with his paints. This will fix the flower in his memory and keep the record of his discoveries, and with very little encouragement he will soon become an ardent seeker after all the

"quaint enamelled eyes,
That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers."

Where there are several children together, a most exciting competition can be got up by offering a prize to the finder of the greatest variety of wild flowers—three days or so being allowed for the search.

Competitive blackberry gathering is also very exciting, the contents of each basket being weighed when brought home; and even more thrilling is the rivalry between early-rising mushroom pickers.

If children bring home a specimen leaf from each kind of tree and trace its outline in their

drawing-book, they will very soon know them all by sight. The ability to distinguish between the songs of birds is perhaps the branch of natural history which yields most satisfaction, and children should be given the chance of learning their "sweet jargoning" by going for some walks with an expert in this music of the woods. The more cultivated their sense of the personality of birds, the more likely they will be to show mercy and refrain from taking more than one out of five eggs, when the time comes for that (with the possible exception of stamps) most popular of all collections.

Butterflies, too, should be recognizable. They will be none the less beautiful for ceasing to be anonymous; and if even the "creepy crawly" insects can be made interesting instead of merely disgusting, great will be the child's gain. If only one could take a scientific interest in black beetles and centipedes, no doubt the physical repulsion would be far less violent.

There are, of course, innumerable ways of occupying children out for a walk which are free from any stigma of instructiveness. Summer sports are too numerous to mention. An autumnal one, which will keep them busy for

a long time, is trying to catch the leaves—"yellow and black and pale and hectic red"—as they fall off the trees and flutter elusively earthwards. To the superstitious, each leaf intercepted before it touches the ground, means a happy month in the coming year.

Then there are always paper chases to warm winter-chilled feet; and if only the much desired snow falls, the far superior, "Bear-hunts," in which fascinating footprints take the place of paper.

But these are strenuous pursuits, and the more stately "grown-ups" can comfort themselves with the fact that most children will delight in a mere walk if you gratify them by raising it to the dignity of an expedition. This is easily achieved by determining on a particular destination to be reached at all cost, and taking rather an across-country route to it.

You must establish yourself as the official guide, and exercise the right to regulate the pace. It is often difficult to know how long a walk may be good for individual children. In considering distances it must be remembered that, at the start, they probably go two miles for every one they advance, as all the time they

are running backwards and forwards, first to one side and then to the other, like young dogs, describing wide circles. Also their disinclination to own that they are tired must never be forgotten. There is so short an interval between the "please carry me" phase and the proud one in which they scorn to admit fatigue.

Their spirits overengine their small bodies, and they will often "conquer" a hill with smiling faces but hammering hearts. Their throats dry, their breath coming in fast, thick pants, on they struggle, all the more doggedly if they have just been reading *Pilgrim's Progress* and have their minds full of such instigating allegories as the "Hill of Difficulty" and the "Slough of Despond."

Even the healthiest child varies very much in his sensations of physical well-being and energy.

Most of us remember days when legs felt crooked—put on back to front, or so short that one's chin seemed almost to scrape the ground. Other days—those on which you had "the rompyness of the heart and the head"—what a delicious sense of buoyancy permeated your whole being. There were wings on your feet

and your body seemed scarcely to weigh. Then to be alive was a joy, every movement an ecstasy, and the earth one large spring-board on which to jump and jump again.

XI

PETS

"'*Pretty Puss*' *will not feed a cat.*"—Old Proverb.

One of the things for which parents must be philosophically prepared, is to find nursery and schoolroom life complicated by the introduction of various kinds of pets. However crowded the rooms and however over-full the hands of those in charge, it will probably be as impossible as it is undesirable to exclude some form of non-human live-stock from the premises.

I don't suppose there has ever been so great an anomaly as a child who did not long to own an animal, the impulse seeming to spring from the earliest instincts. Natural enough the wish personally to possess so pre-eminent a plaything, and yet this aspect only constitutes a small part of the delight of ownership, for does it not simultaneously satisfy the inherent taste for proprietorship, patronage and power?

As an animated toy no triumph of the shop could possibly yield more fun and occupation and, at the same time, what gratification to

incipient vanity, for a child to find himself the object of idolatrous devotion, especially as the allegiance of animals finds such eloquent expression.

The welcoming wag of a dog's tail at his approach, the propitiatory purr of a cat at his touch, the wistful whining of a pony at the sound of his step. Watch any child's face whilst receiving this intoxicating form of homage, and you will realize what happiness you can bestow by the gift of an animal.

It is human nature automatically to become fond of anything you yourself feed and tend; and to find another living thing so simply dependent on his own care, has a very strong appeal to a child.

To give children quantities of pets as though they were merely toys to be played with, which they alternately pester with attentions and neglect, just as the spirit moves them, is one of the most demoralizing forms of spoiling. There should be no sense of property without the cultivation of a corresponding sense of obligation, and it must be clearly understood that the pleasure of owning an animal is a privilege involving considerable responsibility.

Having his name engraved on the collar of a dog must be recognized as a trust as well as a pride by the child, who must daily renew the rights of ownership by taking real trouble, and seeing that his precious possession is properly fed, combed and exercised.

Some children are allowed just arbitrarily to punish and pet, letting all the more onerous care of their dog fall on already overworked servants, and then they bitterly resent the animal transferring his allegiance to those who deserve it.

If a little girl who merely says "tweet, tweet" to her canary and sticks lumps of sugar through the bars of its cage, is allowed to leave all the trouble of cleaning it out to the housemaid, a golden opportunity for instilling the lesson that love means service is neglected, and the self-indulgent spirit of plucking flowers which you do not care to carry is busily encouraged.

Yes, the possession of any animal should always involve some effort on the part of its owner, or else much of the value of pets to children is lost.

It is curious in what totally different ways

children are attracted towards animals; some, apparently, through a precocious objective interest in natural history. These, if not carefully watched, are rather liable to be cruel—more through curiosity than through anything else—the *sensibility* of animals seeming to be the last thing they learn about them. St. Francis of Assisi should be made a familiar and favourite figure in every nursery as soon as possible.

Other children enjoy the sense of power promoted by subservient animals, and to this category probably belonged the boy of whom his proud mother said, "My son is so fond of animals, that I am thinking of making him a butcher."

But most boys and girls are merely conscious of a spring of love that gushes in the heart at the sight of any animal, an emotion particularly aroused by the prettiness, absurdity and pathos of the young and helpless. This love, one not without a tinge of patronage, is akin to the maternal instinct run riot, and is apt to become almost an obsession generally leading to a violently missionary phase.

The passionate propagandists not only de-

termine to be vets when they grow up, but go about slackening bearing reins, pulling up traps and releasing other people's birds from cramped cages. How greatly such children suffer through their sensitive love for animals!

"Why give your heart to a dog to tear?" Actuated by this idea, I have known parents try to protect their children from emotional suffering by resolutely forbidding any pets. Nothing for nothing. And without doubt the luxury of your love for an animal—as for anything else—must be paid for in anxiety, trouble and sorrow. Did not having to part with your dog make a journey a misery instead of a rapture? All the preliminary bustle spoilt because his tail would be half mast at the sight of the ominous trunks, and, as you drove away, the anguish of seeing piteous paws and strained eyes at the window of the room into which he had just been shut. One of the sharpest pangs of my life was when I realized that my pony was not a child-horse and could not grow up and carry me through life. The shock of being told he was already old, and would die while I was still quite young!

Besides all the inevitable sadnesses of re-

lentless fate, there are the appalling possibilities —not to say probabilities—of disasters with pets. The sensitive child who finds his singing bird a cold ball, lying, stiff claws upturned, on the floor of a neglected cage, all because he himself has forgotten to feed it, has little to learn from grief.

But the precautious avoidance of the risk of tears is a poor conception of life. Immunity from sorrow is not happiness, and the child who has not loved and been loved by an animal has surely missed a birthright. After all, it is probably through animals, like ourselves sentenced to life and doomed to death, that mortality is most touchingly and gently broken to children.

Perhaps the disillusionments connected with animals are almost more difficult to bear than the tragedies. That kittens turn into cats, who do not even recognize their mothers, is a fact almost harder to accept than death.

Even if children are denied orthodox pets, you may be sure the instinct cannot be starved out, and almost certainly you will find the gap most inconveniently filled with unpleasing substitutes. Black beetles in boxes from which

they escape—slugs in a tumbler—a hedgehog in a hamper—*anything* so long as it breathes, rather than nothing! Worst of all, there will be innumerable attempts to rear wretched unfledged birds from the nest: each attempt ending in death and in bitter tears, only partially dried by the pomp of a funeral.

Far better to face the situation and formally bestow some interesting and not too troublesome creature.

It is wonderful how much pleasure children can derive even from the possession of wholly unresponsive animals. I defy any human being to establish a relationship with a goldfish or a guinea-pig, and yet what interest and enjoyment these unfriendly creatures give to generation after generation. Even a dormouse, however painfully squeezed by its doting owner, remains sadly detached—one sleeve being as good as any other to run up—but these are pretty creatures with their bright boot-button eyes, and their wild nocturnal deluded gallops in the revolving cage are amusing and pathetic.

Since these impersonal creatures can give so much satisfaction and occupation to a child,

imagine his delight at being the master of a really responsive animal—one who can be the companion of his daily life and return his love with compound interest. The possession of an adored and adoring dog will be one of the greatest happinesses of his childhood, and his parents may well congratulate themselves on so orthodox an animal fixing his affections and sparing them from the fate of those less fortunate who may suffer under anything so smelly as white mice, so destructive as monkeys, or so preposterously prolific as guinea-pigs. The right sort of dog curled up beside the high fender, his tail "beating the drum" at a word, pleasantly completes the nursery picture.

Almost every kind of dog has played the part to perfection; but of all breeds, the pug is said to be the most reliable in the ordeals of a career with children, guaranteed as he is to endure the most provocative of teasing. To be loved by a child is indeed no sinecure, and how much a patient dog will put up with from the small hands of his idols—lovingly licking them whilst they poke and pull—is amongst the most touching wonders of nature.

XII

IN THE DARK

"*Men fear death as children fear to go into the dark, and as that natural fear is increased with tales, so is the other.*"—FRANCIS BACON.

I SUPPOSE it is Fear—with the sense of Injustice for a rival—that causes more misery than any other childish emotion.

Is it not one of the mockeries of motherhood that the adored child, so jealously guarded from all fatigue, draughts and germs, may all the while, unsuspectedly, be suffering far more harm from the insidious effects of fear?

To lie quaking in bed full of a nameless dread, may do more in an hour to injure his nervous system than a week's serious illness.

Much nonsense is talked about "hardening" children, and many sunstrokes and chills are due to the overriding of a theory sound enough in itself; but surely of all so-called "hardening," the most foolish form is, through fear of moral coddling, deliberately to leave a terrified child to fight its fears out alone in the dark.

That his fears are apparent is much to be thankful for (the unrevealed, burrowing kind being the most injurious), and every possible method should be employed to allay them. Yet how many people, for the sake of a principle, will persist in leaving a child alone in the black darkness they know to be terrifying him, by their mistaken obstinacy inflicting sheer cruelty and very likely doing permanent harm? Better any sacrifice of night-lights and time, than to surrender him to such lonely sufferings.

After all it is only a temporary phase through which he is passing. "Pampering" is harmful in so far as it encourages undesirable tendencies to become permanent, and one has yet to hear of the grown-up man who could not bear to be left alone in the dark because he was not condemned to it in childhood.

Though the effects of childish fears may be sadly permanent, their actual sway is only temporary, and therefore none of the arguments in favour of other forms of hardening apply to their treatment.

By the artificial elimination of all germs and of all cold you leave a child's powers of resistance undeveloped. They will be atrophied

before the time comes when you can no longer protect him from the postponed attacks. The garrison army must have practice, since the enemy are always at the gate. But as the very nature of childish fears is to cease with childhood, why hesitate to give their victim all the support possible until his own growth brings him naturally out of the wood?

By all means train your baby to go to sleep in the dark and alone. That he should do so is obviously wholesome and convenient, and the sense of fear should, of course, never be suggested to him; but directly you recognize its presence, and a consequent dread of loneliness, then treat the condition with exceptional measures, just as you would any other temporary trouble.

Even if it were possible to remember all the fears of the known and of the unknown that assailed one's small self—all the horrors that hovered in the "spangly gloom" of darkness—one would still not be forewarned and forearmed for the protection of one's own children.

The shafts of fear are so innumerable that it is impossible to close all doors to their assault. Explanations are not bolts and bars. Entrance

is gained through the imagination, and equally through the want of it. Experience sometimes opens the door, and the lack of it flings it wide. Whatever a child's nature and surroundings, fear will find out the way.

It would take volumes to describe all the terrors common to children, but a few obvious examples clamour for mention.

To begin with fears inspired by material things; there are the semi-rational ones due to ignorance of the laws governing objects—in themselves really dangerous. For instance, because unaware of the limitations of machinery, children, safe in bed, will lie trembling with fear of an engine, the screech of which frightened them miles away.

Fear is as useful a safeguard as pain is as a signal, and no mother will wish to destroy the sense of danger in her child. One must not tell him that fire does not burn, nor dogs bite; but one can try and make him appreciate his night-nursery immunity, by explaining that dogs are tied up in kennels, and trains confined to railway lines.

Then there is the fear born from the shock of seeing something startlingly ugly. It may not

seem to threaten any special injury, but appalls by its intimation of the horrible and unknown. For example, a mask, put on with the best intentions, may often seriously frighten and haunt a child. No use telling him it was "dear Uncle Ned" inside. "But where is it *now*?" he will want to know. The worst of this is that things not intrinsically in the least alarming, become so from association. Owing to the shock of a mask, sometimes any form of dressing up—even the sight of a tiny child attired as a fairy, will awaken acute alarm.

The fears of the imagination, or rather of the fancy, are legion. Children are apt to see personality in all things. To them, as to primitive man, anything in nature, from thunder to the tree outside their nursery, may appear a malignant enemy; and their atavistic dread is busily fostered by fiction.

Very often that which most frightens them exercises an irresistible fascination. Like the moth to the candle, they return to the cause of their trouble. If a child ceaselessly clamours for stories about witches, turning over the leaves of every new book in frantic search for their pictures, you may be sure that he is

frightened by the idea of them, and preparing himself for a bad night. The fact that, theoretically, he is a young rationalist is no protection. I have often heard the words, "How lucky it is there aren't any witches," coming from the pale and quivering lips of children anxious to have their professed incredulity endorsed by grown-up people. Their expressed beliefs or disbeliefs have little connection with what they feel "inside," and sometimes one sees them making the most pitiable attempts to bluff themselves into comfortable scepticism.

But worse than any specific fear—even of witch or of wolf—is that mysterious nameless dread from whose cruel clutch I'm sure no child wholly escapes.

Is there any one who cannot remember suddenly sitting bolt upright in bed, clammy cold and with hammering heart, "distilled almost to jelly with the act of fear"?

Why this wholly undefinable terror? There was no expectation of any particular harm, but rather a curdling consciousness of something lurking—a sense of infinite horror and evil. From this fantastic kind of fear, children are fortunately very susceptible to relief. It can,

in fact, only flourish in solitude. There is nothing more pathetic than the way a child, who knows he will be frightened so soon as he is left in the dark, will try to keep you in the room. He asks you questions, to which he doesn't want to know the answers—plaits your fingers in his—does anything to delay your departure, *except* confess his dread. How seldom will he do this, and then with what reluctance!

Is this due to a precocious sense of shame about being afraid? Does he feel under an obligation to be brave? Or is it sometimes through fear of Fear of which he dare not, so to speak, tell tales?

Every effort should be made, tactfully, to invite confidences as to their nervous sufferings, from children.

Irrational fears, what psycho-analysts call "complexes," may often be exorcised, if tracked to their sources, by the process known as "unwinding" and may then be cured.

To some children, loneliness is as positive a thing as pain. Darkness seems solid and stifling, and to be left alone in it induces fear, just as cold and fatigue admit infection. In

the state of mind thus produced the quite commonplace grows creepy, and anything may become terrifying to children—their quickened imaginations giving to "airy nothing a local habitation and a name." Surely, not to go to the rescue of a child whom you know to be in an agony from fears you have it in your power to disperse, shows an extraordinary devotion to theory: and how unkind to meet their childish irrationality with unsympathetic common sense! I remember once summoning up courage to beg my nurse for a night-light, and her laughing at my absurd trust in its beneficent beams. She actually said, "What good would a night-light be if anything was to come?" and all I could do was to bury myself under the bedclothes, hot shame added to cold fear.

Of course, one was not so silly as to suppose that either the friendly night-light or the fascinating shadows it threw on the ceiling could be of any practical use against giants or hobgoblins. The whole point was, that the state of mind in which one believed in the very existence of such dread visitants was only fostered by darkness. Equally, Mother's presence would be powerless to quell the malice of the weakest witch, but

when she was blessedly there, witches, so far from being expected—were safely stowed away in story books.

This being so, surely it is folly to make a fetish of a child going to sleep in the dark, or to leave him alone with his fears.

Needless to say, many of the acutest terrors are directly inspired by grown-up people, generally, let us hope, through stupidity and lack of imagination; but there are criminals who, for purposes of control, deliberately play on the nerves of children. They govern with threats of goblin and ghost, and their wretched charges, having "supped full of horrors," are sent quivering to bed, there wakefully to lie in wretched wonder of a nightmare world.

A great and frequent folly is that of turning a natural protection into a supposed peril—a common example being, with foolish threats, to take the name of policemen in vain.

To how many children has the benevolent "Bobby" thus mischievously been made an absolute bugbear? Then all the silly ideas implanted by grown-ups amiably anxious to amuse! "Take care nothing catches hold of your ankle as you get into bed!" How many

evenings were thus agonized for me, and what desperate flying leaps I used to take, to get into bed and safety.

As though people and books were not sufficient, how often you frightened yourself by stimulating your own imagination to the creative point. I remember dressing up as a ghost to frighten the housemaid, with the boomerang result that I screamed all night myself; the fact that I was by way of "not believing in ghosts" making no difference.

Looking back, how difficult it is to analyse one's fears, and one's emotions and thoughts under their influence. How far did one know them to be subjective? Did a fraction of one's mind remain rational though powerless to soothe one's nerves? And what was one's motive for sometimes screwing one's courage to the sticking point? Why used I to force myself to solitary walks in the dark, past whispering trees and stretching shadows? Was it bravado, self-discipline, or was there the subconscious wish to reassure myself as to the absurdity of my own apprehensions?

Impossible entirely to protect a child from the influence of fear, but any one may have the

privilege of helping his escape from its clutches, and of healing the wounds already inflicted.

No more becoming, love-engendering rôle for a mother than that of reassurance. In so far as children are capable of gratitude, it is towards those who *soothe* far more than towards those who *amuse*; and to take away one fear is to inspire more love than to give a thousand treats. Your child has many keys to his heaven of fun; easy enough for him to enter without your help; but how often will he turn to you to release him from his hell of fear, and surely, surely, he should never look in vain.

XIII

AT THE SEASIDE

"Shoreward she hies, her wooden spade in hand,
Straight down to childhood's ancient field of play,
To claim her right of common in the land
Where little edgeless tools make easy way."

TENNYSON TURNER.

Boys and girls whose permanent homes are by the sea must miss one of the greatest excitements known to childhood. I don't think anything else quite equalled the rapture of "going to the seaside"—not, indeed, experienced in its full intensity on arriving for the first time before you knew what you were in for, but on all subsequent visits.

Directly you stepped out of the train, bliss began with a sense of physical elation coming over you as though balloons had been tied under your arms and were lifting you off your feet. Who can forget that first intoxicating whiff of salted air?

As you drove along in the fly, and saw the familiar poppies drowsing in fields verging on

chalk cliffs, what innumerable delights came thronging back to your memory; and how your exhilarated senses revelled in anticipation of all that was in store. The glamour of shells, pools, starfish and seaweed—the feel of ribbed sand to bare feet—the joys of digging—the thrill of crabs alive or dead—glimpses into a fisherman's tarred hut—the bliss of paddling, the glory of bathing and *shrimps for tea*!

The unending fun of the seaside, imbibed as naturally and inevitably as the air is breathed, is certainly part of the birthright of children, and no mother should be so disloyal to her own childhood as not to try and arrange for a few weeks of such health-dealing delight.

It is not necessarily a very expensive treat. The price of lodgings has come down again, and, during the earlier summer months, a bungalow can often be found for a very reasonable rent. Where children are concerned, it is waste of time laboriously to hunt for some secluded out-of-the-way village, in which convenience is probably sacrificed to picturesque solitude.

The senses of "grown-ups," with "eyeballs vexed and tired," may well crave for complete

quiet and undisturbed communing with nature. But to children there will be nothing jarring in the noise, glare and glitter of a popular seaside resort. Far from asphalt offending them, they and their nurses will enjoy the esplanade; and as for all the perquisites—the brass band, niggers, donkeys, "Happy-Snaps" and Punch and Judy, these are pleasures quite as intense and just as wholesome as the smell of brine, the roar of surf and the "rainbow of the salt sand wave."

So long as *only* man is vile, what care they? Provided the shell-strewn shore abounds with rocks and crabs, they will not mind how many other human beings they share them with. But, for the sake of solitude, to plant children where there is only dull shingle instead of yellow sands, is real waste of time.

It is the greatest pity merely to use the seaside as an emergency resource—a place in which to recover from illness. Its value is to endorse good health just as much as to restore it, and only the well child can reap the full benefits, a convalescent being naturally cut off from many of the healthy activities. Very short visits are scarcely worth while, so many

children being actually upset by the first few days. Three weeks is the minimum from which to expect any lasting benefit, and, of course, the ideal plan is a stay of two or three months. This allows the children to become really brine-soaked. They look like sun-kissed apricots, and seem so thoroughly pickled by sun and salt as to be for some time, to a great extent, immune to infection and exposure.

I'm sure the good effects of a summer at the seaside can scarcely be exaggerated. The children are, indeed, apt to become almost disfigured by health, and their appearance may well be something of a shock to the vain mother who saw them off at the station three weeks ago. The flower-like faces, that smiled farewell from the train, have turned to terra-cotta and are decorated with freckles as large as pennies, their hair and eyelashes are bleached and their legs and arms actually peeling.

Like many other things, life on the shore is far better arranged for children than it used to be. The sea urchins of to-day are much more sensibly dressed and managed than their parents were and revel in undreamt-of liberty.

I remember when paddling was a very sol-

emn ritual. The thermometer was consulted, and the weather had to be pronounced exactly favourable before permission was given. Even then, only two minutes by the clock, and out I was pulled and my feet were ruthlessly, if ineffectually dried, to be thrust—all sandy and sticky—back into the bathos of stockings and shoes.

Nowadays children are really given the freedom of the shore, and in warm weather they leave shoes and stockings in their proper place at home, and run in and out of the sea, at will, all day long. Their legs are only dried by the sea, and it is precisely this steady salt-saturation which, provided they are kept warm, is so splendidly strengthening to growing limbs. Each child should be equipped with a pair of oilskin paddlers. They can be worn over any ordinary clothes, and will keep them dry through any amount of wading or sitting in pools.

With a healthy baby this treatment cannot be started too soon. Could there be a more delightful and painless way of learning to walk? To totter barefoot over damp salubrious sands, and after falling so deliciously softly,

to have the satisfaction of looking back on all the fascinating footprints made by each staggering step. In the case of a baby too delicate for paddling, sea water should be brought home in buckets and warmed for its bath.

The occupations for children on the shore are quite unending, and so long as they can be on it, no indolent "grown-up" need dread those disturbing words, "Tell me a story," or "What shall we do *now*?"

All the outfit required is a wooden spade (tin ones are very dangerous), a pail and a shrimp net. Given these, and the right kind of sand, a child will be happier than in any Christmas-tide toyshop.

First, there is every degree of digging—from the baby making pat-a-cake puddings to the boy defying the tide with complicated castles. Then the burying parties in search of dead crabs—the rides on great branches of seaweed—the slithering scrambles over green slime-clad rocks—the splashings into populous pools after darting shrimps and the patient searching for shells, spurred on by the undying hope of finding cornelians. If legs grow tired, a pail can be made the target for a fusillade of pebbles, dried

crackling seaweed be popped, and the sand used as a slate for signatures and artistic designs.

And all the wonderful variety of the sea's appearance and behaviour. For days lying like painted glass, only wrinkling and breaking into tiny ripples just before it touches the toes of paddlers; then the thrilling, turbulent times, when winds roar, white horses toss their spumed heads far out to sea, and the waters swirl all over the place, where, only yesterday, you had your tea on the beach. You are cut off from the shore, now completely hidden by surging sea, but you walk on the wind-swept esplanade, peering through telescopes, and every now and then exhilarated by a salt sprinkle of spray on your face or an actual fleck of foam in your mouth.

Though boredom is banished at the seaside, there is no truce from fear. Pleasures can be made very painful, and the yells of children being forcibly bathed are far too frequent. I don't suppose parents could inflict more misery than they sometimes do in dipping and ducking children, abject with cold and fear. This familiar sight is usually the result of mismanagement. First impressions are all-important,

and great care must be taken to avoid frightening a child by its first bathe.

It is often very difficult to keep accustomed paddlers within reasonable limits, but this is no guarantee that they will enjoy bathing. In ordinary clothes a child may be inconveniently willing to wade up to his neck, but announce to the same child that he is to bathe—dress him in a bathing suit, and behold him tearfully protesting on the beach, refusing so much as to wet his feet.

It is a common and comic sight to see children, intended merely to paddle, revelling in an impromptu bathe, and others—orthodoxly attired for bathing—perversely refusing even to paddle! Tact should be able to prevent such sad miscarriage of a "treat," and the best plan is to allow paddling to develop imperceptibly into bathing. On a very warm day, let the child have its bathing dress put on, as though merely with the object of allowing more untrammelled paddling, and in all probability he will soon be sitting happily in a deep pool, or lying chuckling with laughter—the waves breaking over his back. With very young children it is really wiser to begin with a

pool, for, if they get knocked over by a wave, it may take weeks for them to get over their fright and hurt feelings.

It is more often just the coldness of the sea that frightens them than any sense of danger. Once the habit has been established, varying degrees of temperature will not hurt, and children should be able to bathe practically every day; but for the first bathe really warm weather should be patiently waited for. The shock of very cold water, which takes their breath away and makes their teeth chatter, can be so appalling to children; and, having once experienced it, they are liable to expect, and thus to suggest it to themselves.

Most children will prefer the Ring-a-Roses school of bathing to having swimming lessons, and mothers need not be distressed at their reluctance. Boys are often inclined to be more nervous in the water than girls, just as they are about riding. It is, however, a great pity not to take advantage of the chance of learning to swim, for there is no healthier exercise, and once their nervousness is overcome, they will usually get on like frogs.

Much depends on the tact and patience of

the instructor who holds them by a rope, or puts his hand under their chins, while they float, supported by the leather balls, called wings. If he is able to inspire them with confidence, all should soon be well, but he is apt to seem rather a grim figure in his shiny black oil-skins. Sometimes children are less alarmed by having their first lessons in a swimming-bath; but here, too, they may look piteously cold and miserable.

Whether happy or unhappy, no small child should be allowed to stay in the water for more than ten minutes. Then, after being well rubbed, he should be given something to eat. I don't think any food ever tasted quite so good as the mouthfuls swallowed after a successful bathe, just as your skin began to tingle, and a glow of warmth and pride suffused your being. . . .

The importance of where you stay must not be overlooked in the anxiety to find the best beach. The idea of lodgings may not appeal to the luxurious or the adventurous, but their comfortable atmosphere and genial landlady can figure very pleasantly in memories of childhood. How one loved the abrupt little jerry-

built staircase, the pegs for hats, and the panes of coloured glass in the door.

Even for the "grown-ups" there can, if well chosen, be a very restful way of doing the seaside. What a relief to have no running of a house, no bargaining with tradesmen, no coping with servants. Such a respite may be well worth while, even at the cost of simple fare and small rooms overcrowded with funny furniture and ornaments. Given the right sort of landlady and a good example of the kind of house she occupies, there should be freedom from friction of any kind.

If your party does not fill the house, it is better to go where there are other children than to run the risk of acidulated adults objecting to the noise and litter of your own family. Some, disagreeably inclined, might even protest against the presence of pails and spade in the hall, and of shells and seaweed in the bath.

There are different ways of settling with your landlady. If she be willing, it is much better to be on what are called inclusive terms than to leave matters more vague. So much a week is paid for the rooms, and this sum in-

cludes attendance, cooking, lighting, etc. Some landladies will entice with a much lower rent than others, but this is often very misleading. At the end of the week they may present you with a bill disappointingly swollen by "extras," little beyond the use of the rooms being taken for granted, and separate payment demanded for baths, attendance, gas and the use of kitchen fire.

Far better pay a considerably larger sum for the rooms on the clear understanding that there is to be no piling on of extras.

The other important alternative is whether you are to be catered for or to buy your own provisions. If you are *en pension* you will pay so much a head a week for each person, and the landlady will feed you according to her lights. The kind of diet you expect should be clearly stated before the terms are clinched, and, if she is honest and capable, this method will provide far the most complete holiday, as you will be freed from any shopping or uncertainty as to how much you are spending.

It is a great relief to eliminate all bills, and the agreeable element of surprise is introduced at meals. Your landlady must, of course, be

of the kind who, basket in hand, sallies forth to do her own shopping—pinching the fish, prodding the meat and burrowing beneath the "tops" of fruit baskets. Without taking commissions, she should be on friendly terms with the tradesmen, so that they may give her the chance of the first shrimps and strawberries.

The other plan is to buy your own food and hand it over to the landlady to cook. Shopping may amuse you, and you will be able to order exactly what you like, but you must risk any degree of food embezzlement. It is too great a bore to have to measure the mutton and count the lumps of sugar. The dishonest landlady is the exception, not the rule; but, all else being equal, to have the ordering and the cooking in the same capable hands should be more economical.

In choosing rooms the chief point is to satisfy yourself as to the standard of cleanliness. One has had disagreeable experiences of lodgings in which that stale smell, mingled of cheese and musty upholstery, pertinaciously lingered; but it is very easy to find such accommodation as would satisfy the most uncompromising of housemaids. Beds must be adequately com-

fortable, and a prospective tenant allowed interrogatively to pummel the mattress.

Falling asleep to the sound of "eternal whisperings round earth's human shores" has a great and soothing charm. The nearer the sea the better, but far too much can be sacrificed for the sake of a "sea view," and small distorted rooms—their windows squinting for this purpose—are not worth the extra price charged for the privilege.

Very spacious rooms cannot be expected, and the same style still prevails in most of them. There will probably be illuminated texts on the walls, ferns in the fireplace, and much evidence as to some relative having shown remarkable skill at the cocoanut shies. Where else on earth could so remarkable an array of "ornaments" have been collected?

It should be tactfully suggested that as many as possible of these breakable trophies be stowed away. Their presence is not fair to children under the influence of sea air.

Far more important than the shape or style of the rooms is the temperament of your landlady. The class has been much maligned in fiction, but my first-hand experience has been

most reassuring, and it is very easy to find excellent examples at all seaside resorts. Obviously she must be honest and a thoroughly good, plain cook—no mean ambition, for rice and prunes may be wonderfully transfigured; and in addition to such talents, the ideal woman will be beaming and motherly.

It is a curious fact that no seaside landlady is ever known so much as to go on the beach, far less to bathe or to paddle; but she must have a good-natured tolerance for these strange habits in other people, and she will raise no objections to "Man Friday" footprints on her stairs, for children *must* be allowed to run in and out barefoot. She will also smile on temporary boarders in the shape of the crabs, starfish and sea anemones brought home in pails, and be ready to equip picnics and wring out bathing dresses at any hour.

Of course she will consider your children to be the "nicest little lodgers" she has ever had, enjoy comfortable evening confabulations with their nurse, and have the art to make you think the admirably cooked sole you have just eaten, the very best fish that ever came out of the sea.

XIV

MY OWN GARDEN

"And when long years are flown,
And the proud words, 'Mine own,'
Familiar sounds, what joy in field or bower,
To view by Memory's aid
Again that garden glade!"

JOHN KEBLE.

ALL parents who are so fortunate as to possess gardens have it in their power to confer the very greatest delight.

Imagine a child's joy and pride in having a part, however tiny, of the garden allotted to him, as his very own.

From the grown-up person's point of view there could be no cheaper and less troublesome way of providing enthralling occupation and wholesome exercise devoid of danger, within sight of the window.

And for the child himself, in spite of some inevitable disappointments, to initiate him into so productive a form of play as gardening, is indeed to give him a "blue bird" in the hand and the bush. Behold this year enlivened and

next year endowed. For, by all the laws of childhood, thus armed with a watering-can to enter into conspiracy with nature—forcing her to be your playfellow—is certain to be an ever-recurring delight.

It is indeed the most blissful kind of play, but play enriched with all the dignity of work, as well as with the charms of conjuring.

What pride, joy and excitement in thus waving the wand of a wizard! For what else is it to transform little seeds from paper packets into miracles of colour and scent?

The digging involved is exercise as good as that on the sands; but, instead of being doomed to destruction by the tide, here exertion is dignified by taking thought for the morrow.

The mere delicious dabbling in earth and water — the authorized "messing" — fills a child's cup of pleasure almost to the brim, and added to this are the pleasures of proprietorship—amongst the earliest of instincts.

Children delight in ceremony, and considerable formality should be attached to the transfer of their portion of the garden.

The plot of ground should be called after its owner, and no one, without his permission,

must pluck its flowers or even walk in it; and when he begins to reap his sowing, let his endeavours be crowned by recognition. For instance, on one or two days in the month it might be an accepted thing that the flowers in the drawing-room or the nursery are supplied by him, and he should be encouraged to contribute to the decoration of the church—especially at the Harvest Thanksgiving—to present birthday bouquets, and generally to look to it that *his* flowers be not "born to blush unseen."

In this garden he should be influenced to see a trust as well as a toy, and no doubt he will be apt enough to realize the solemn glory and privilege of being thus made responsible for the smallest portion of Mother Earth. There can be no better way of teaching him cause and effect, no prettier school of experience.

All necessary tools can be bought in engagingly small sizes, and these, with his initials on them, should be given honourable place in the gardener's shed.

In spite of the fun of sowing seeds in the spring, what children really like is being able to stick some flower in full bloom in their ground and water it to their heart's content

and its own drowning. So, in October, the month for the putting in of plants, the gardener should be able to spare enough to furnish the small beds.

Amongst the simplest to rear and the most satisfactory in result are London Pride, Phlox, Forget-me-not, Pansies, Violets, Sweet William and the Southernwood — colloquially called "Lad's Love." Roses will be a source of great pride, and, with the little pink "Maiden Roses," it is very easy to achieve success, their great merit being that they require no pruning. Of course some Daffodil and Tulip bulbs must on no account be forgotten.

Any of these simple flowers will make a good setting to the sun-flushed, dishevelled little delver—his curls scarce higher than their tallest petals.

A kind and tactful gardener, though prodigal of counsel, will not detract from a child's dignity by actual assistance, but leave him free to think he has done it all himself.

Thus he will explain how a trench of potatoes should be laid, but most of the actual manual labour—the digging and depositing—can quite well be left to very small hands. He will talk

to him as a fellow-worker, inquiring as to his prospects, discussing the weather and congratulating him on the looks of his flowers.

But, in spite of all that may be said as to the pleasures of pride and responsibility, the fact remains that what children really enjoy is just having a bit of ground sacred to themselves, wherein they can mess and muddle whenever they feel inclined.

A garden is, above all, the blessed excuse for watering themselves as well as their plants, and, unless there is a certain amount of stimulating encouragement from "grown-ups," gardening may well degenerate into the mere glorified making of mud-pies—the children plastering themselves with earth, and impatiently pulling up plants by the root to find out how they are getting on.

To learn to wait will be the most difficult lesson. Faith droops unless there is always "something to see," and, in order to prevent lapses of interest, the aim of the grown-up person in charge should be to have *something* flowering in the children's garden during every month in the year. This is no very ambitious undertaking, and perhaps the following simple

suggestions, all of which I have seen successfully carried out in a small cottage garden, may be of some service.

If your space is limited, all that need be dedicated to the purpose is a piece of ground nine feet square.

All round this, plant an edging of Box, or, better still, of sweet-smelling Thyme; and let the new year be greeted by a bunch of yellow Aconites, their golden faces shining out of their green collars. If one or two little bulbs are planted, they will increase a hundredfold.

January must have its Snowdrops too, the prettier single ones being the first to press their white faces through the wintry earth.

During February a gleaming Crocus should be holding up its golden cup to catch the struggling sunbeams, and bright Daffodils will be fluttering in the cold winds of March.

In April the "pale primrose that forsaken dies" will breathe its faint sweet perfume beside the gaudier gold-laced Polyanthus; and in the month of May the Fleur-de-lys and any of the lovely Iris family should flourish. In June the air will be fragrant with Pinks—

either the modern great Mrs. Simpkins or the old-fashioned smaller white ones, equally if not more sweet-scented.

In July the little gardener will have opulent red and white Damask Roses, to remind him of the York and Lancaster wars.

By August the heavy-winged bees will be "made faint with too much sweet," for in May the child—presented with a penny packet of seed of Morning Glory, one of dark blue and another of the turquoise blue Convolvulus Minor—will have made little holes in the soil with his stick, dropped seed into each one and covered them up again. He will also have raked a piece of soil, and thrown on it a few seeds of white Alyssum, the pure petals of which will now shine out from the mass of shimmering blue, rioting over that part of the ground where the bulbs came up before.

During the previous autumn a Sedum Spectabile will have been planted, and in September "Flutterbys"—the Peacock, the Painted Lady and Red Admiral—will be quivering over its glaucous flat leaves and broad pink flowers. October can have its purple and white Michaelmas Daisy for the child to pluck,

"Look at the little Miss Daisies I have made!" and, in November the China or Monthly Rose, put in a year ago, will be opening its mild pink buds.

In December—if only the child has remembered to water constantly that greatest of treasures, a Christmas Rose, it will proudly put forth flowers of purest white.

Thus all the year round there will be something showing, and every month will have its miracle.

As for vegetables, if no others are considered, there *must* be radishes and mustard and cress. Nothing quite comes up to the joy of having your own grown ones for tea.

Such a garden should be the scene of pleasant toil and recurring reward—a school of faith, hope and reverence. And, in all the gallery of a mother's pictures, there will be none prettier or more symbolic than that of the earth-stained triumphant little gardener, watering his feet and his flowers from a bright green can; himself looking like a wild flower amongst his meek subjects, all the "prim little scholars trained to stand in rows."

XV

A FEW INEXPENSIVE DELIGHTS

"Know you what it is to be a child? . . . It is to be so little that the elves can reach to whisper into your ear; it is to turn pumpkins into coaches, and mice into horses, lowness into loftiness, and nothing into everything, for each child has its fairy godmother in its own soul; it is to live in a nutshell and count yourself a king of infinite space; it is

"To see a world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour."

FRANCIS THOMPSON.

I DOUBT whether there is anything on which more money is unnecessarily squandered than on the buying of expensive toys for children. Not that these elaborate works of art are not appreciated by the young as well as by the old, but, though the sense of possession may be agreeably flattered by fine property, the fact remains that all the things which cost much money remain superfluities, not essentials, to a child, for whom, owing to the independence of his inner life, the maximum of enjoyment can be procured at the minimum of expense.

A child's ecstasy is fortunately not one of the things for which his parents will have to pay, since a perfect blaze of excitement can be lit by the cheapest offering or by the simplest occupation.

Watch any child on Christmas morning quivering in bed amidst all the surrounding litter of paper and presents—his cheeks flushed and his eyes grown large and dark with excitement. How often are the most elaborate of the toymakers' ingenuities flung aside, and the whole attention of the "man of great possessions" concentrated on a penny whistle or some such humble tenant of the bulging stocking.

No child-lover need ever feel the slightest distress at the inability to buy expensive presents, for the little cup of joy can so readily be filled to the very brim, and no refinement from Hamley's could fill it any fuller.

The actual opening of a parcel is, of course, in itself one of the supreme sensations in childhood; for, whilst you fumbled with its knotted string and crackling paper, something almost mystical in its vague suggestiveness excited you far more than any definite expectations as to the contents.

Apart from your own pleasure in presenting those that have been carefully chosen and packed, quite *unintentional* toys will often prove the best, acting, as they do, as incentives to the imagination, whereas the elaborate ready-made ones tend rather towards its partial atrophy. Objects to the purblind eye of a grown-up person apparently quite ineligible, can, as playthings, be invested with the most wonderful charm.

For instance, to an imaginative child may not an ordinary towel-horse become quite as living and loved a steed as the costliest rocking-horse endowed with real hair, harness, glass eyes, and vermilion nostrils?

A child's faculty for make-believe is so astonishingly active that the art of play is a proudly subjective one. The very fact that he is making bricks without straw may indeed be half the fun, and out of these same bricks what cloud-capped palaces may arise!

There is scarcely any experience the thrill of which he may not taste within four walls, and no sense of heroism with which he may not glow by bare imagination of a risk.

Romantic undertakings, palpitating perils,

triumphant laurels, all are his for the mere pretending. For is he not his own wizard and thus enabled, with the drawing-room furniture, to equip himself for wonderful adventures by sea and land?

Whereas a complicated finished toy, such as a mechanical train, can only play one part, the most humdrum sofa may by the alchemy of childhood, at a whim, be converted into an aeroplane, a night-express or a pirate ship.

The carpet can become a surging sea, and the footstool an imperilled craft on which a small mariner desperately battles with the brass poker for an oar.

But shipwreck and battle will not always claim their attention, and it is strange the way in which children will turn for refreshment from realities to make-believe, even though it be only to a pantomime of the tamest situations.

For example, a child who has been wearied to groaning point by sitting still at table, directly he is released will often settle down and pretend to be at a meal, rapturously and with an admirable gravity going through all the movements of eating and drinking.

Similarly, for all his dread of going upstairs

into the dulness of darkness and sleep, he will be quite happy to spend many minutes stretched out on the sofa pretending to be asleep, breathing like clockwork, "eyelids lightly falling on little glistening seas," and his carefully arranged countenance only distending into a grin under close scrutiny.

As an elder child when I wanted to read my own book, I often took advantage of this convenient taste to gain respite from small brothers and sisters, and I don't believe the trick was ever seen through. My equally successful out-of-door ruse was to propose a *slow* race round a field. The child who returned last received a penny, and many quiet afternoons were thus cheaply purchased.

Amongst the other more domestic dramas I have seen rapturously enjoyed in the drawing-room are Christmas morning and a visit from the Doctor.

Then the instinct for mimicry is a source of endless self-entertainment, and for these performances no properties are required. A tiny child will totter round the room, in rapid succession impersonating a policeman, a steam-engine, a bear or a parent.

"As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation."

However, people who are really fond of children will not be content with merely giving them the freedom of their furniture and the tribute of their applause, but will want their affection to take the concrete form of a parcel inscribed with the child's name. If they have the money they will delight in bestowing some triumph of the toyshop. There is no harm in this indulgence and an industry is thereby encouraged, but I do very decidedly think it a pity for a child to have his nursery littered with pretentious breakables, and so many of the most expensive toys are the most easily broken.

In any case, for those who cannot afford a costly present, what an endless list could be made of bliss-bringing objects which cost little or nothing in the giving; and there is no reason why such things should not be presented with formality, and dignified by being made up into parcels with the full honours of string and ink just as though they came from the grandest shop.

To give a few examples out of the thousands of possibilities.

Take an ordinary ball of string. What an inexhaustible delight to a child! What can be done with it? What can *not* be done with it? It savours of infinity. Over a mechanical toy it has the immense advantage of being unbreakable. It would be difficult to lose and—out of his great wealth—the proud proprietor may make others happy by cutting and distributing lengths.

A ball of gleaming wire has a romance of its own, and a stick of scarlet sealing-wax gives happiness well worth the pain to fingers.

Then an ordinary cork out of a bottle, one end of which has been burnt in a candle, yields rapturous delight to any child instructed how thus to decorate his face with blackened eyebrows, fierce moustaches and whiskers.

Little rough boats, either ready made or fashioned out of fragments of bark or of cork, equip a child for that outdoor game, which, I think, fascinated me more than any other. If you have a convenient stream, there could be no more enchanting race than one between these small craft; each child choosing his own champion and presiding over its course with a long stick to poke it along. The particular

brook, which babbled so blessedly in my own childhood, was perfect for this purpose, as it continually disappeared under the ground to emerge at some other point in the garden. The excitement of waiting, stick in hand, to see whose boat would reappear first became increasingly thrilling as the winning-post was neared. Quite often one of the little vessels would get stuck out of sight, and then the height of enjoyment was to dam the stream so that its augmented current might dislodge the stranded ship.

Not only are the joys of both make-believe and of parcels to be had without expense, but what innumerable treats in the way of occupation can be provided for next to nothing. The first ride on the top of an omnibus! This is better than any subsequent sprawl in a Rolls-Royce.

Fishing with a crooked pin tied on to a piece of string!

The most supreme rod from a shop will surely never be wielded with greater satisfaction.

The glamour of making your own daisy chain!

The most sparkling diamonds could scarcely bring the same romance of adornment to maturity.

Then all the palpitating thrills of Hide-and-Seek are to be procured gratis; and in this game, I believe, the utmost pitch of human excitement may be experienced. I doubt whether the heart of the convict pursued by bloodhounds could hammer more loudly than may that of the small child hiding beneath the bed from his own beloved brother.

And then, in addition to any pastime deliberately designed for the entertainment of children, grown-up people are apt to forget the joy of their initiation into what are to become the commonplace experiences of life.

To be allowed to pour out "real water."

Permission to "go into ink" (as school children call the promotion from pencil to pen).

Posting a letter, or the one you receive destined to be carried and crumpled till bedtime. The drama of the first telegram—my own, one of mere birthday wishes, hung framed in my bedroom for many years.

Learning the use of blotting-paper.

Being out in the dark.

"Seeing life" by the first glass of ginger-beer or the "lemon suck" noisily imbibed through a straw.

With what rapturous awe were these and innumerable other experiences first attended!

Then how easily you were imposed on through your pride, and made to keep quiet by being allowed to do something mildly useful. Next to being called "brave" or being entrusted with a secret, I think to be praised for being useful was what pleased me most.

Pasting newspaper cuttings into a scrap-book; holding wool to be wound; picking up ping-pong balls; cutting the leaves of a book putting water into flower vases. Any of these humdrum tasks can be made to seem delightful privileges to a guileless child, and, best of all, sweet flattery for a wet day was to be allowed to go and "help" the cook by shelling peas, beating eggs, stoning raisins or taking the "tea-lashes" out of the pot. I think I always suspected that the making of toffee was organized for my own benefit, but it was none the less one of the most appreciated of treats.

Then amongst the delights that have neither to be ordered nor paid for nor acknowledged,

one must not forget that admirable impresario whom my nurse always referred to as "the clerk of the weather."

For amongst the things in which children most excel must be ranked their appreciation of every variety of bad weather. A real wet day made a delightful change to routine; and as for snow, I remember actually praying for its fall, and feeling bitter envy of the children in stories who had the wonderful good fortune to be snowed up.

The romance of floods was early instilled by the reading of Miss Martineau's *Settlers at Home*, and I lived in the vain hope of awaking one morning to the sound of water lapping against my window panes.

Any atmospheric extreme had glamour. Either the quivering glare of the day declared too hot for lessons, or the still whiteness of one so frosty that horses had to be roughed.

To be caught out in a hailstorm was a real adventure, and a bad thunderstorm a magnificent milestone in my experience. I remember some glorious ones at night, my enjoyment of which rivalled the rapture of a theatre; and this enjoyment was enriched by the satisfaction of

seeing other children absurdly frightened by the very roars and flashes in which I revelled.

Again, one of the most valuable perquisites owed to the involuntary romanticism of childhood, is that mere inconveniences appear in the light of coveted excitements. Anything unusual was hailed as a treat, the irregular was the romantic. What fun it was to get your feet really wet—to lose your luggage—to miss a train—to wear a bandage—to be smoked out of your bedroom! You soon forget how much you once enjoyed precisely the things which now seem most annoying; but shades of the prison-house are fast closing round the child to whom petty inconveniences are ceasing to be adventures.

XVI

THE FIRST THEATRE

"But when we got in and I beheld the green curtain that veiled a heaven to my imagination, which was soon to be disclosed—the breathless anticipation I endured!"
—Charles Lamb.

In straining my eyes to scan the misty landscape of my own childhood, amongst the many peaks of radiant excitement I can discern none higher and more glittering than that of my first play.

Of all pleasures it was perhaps the most palpitating, and so vivid is the remembrance of childish rapture, that even now at the entrance to a theatre I am conscious of a slight throb, a faint stirring of the sensations of long ago. Through the means of one's children the old emotion is to a certain extent reawakened, for it is scarcely possible not to be infected by some of their excitement. You can almost hear the beating of their hearts, and your own pulse quickens in amused sympathy.

What a delight it is to be seated beside a

quick-breathing child instead of by a yawning dramatic critic; and what fun once more to find yourself wishing a play were longer instead of shorter.

Of the many vicarious pleasures for which we are indebted to our children, this of theatre-going is certainly one of the most delightful, and to some parents it is perhaps a temptation to indulge themselves in its enjoyment too soon and too often. For, much as children may vary in the extent to which they are stage-struck, and whatever the degree of their sensibility, the first play is surely bound to be one of the most memorable milestones of childhood, and opinions differ as to how soon so thrilling a treat should be conferred. Probably in the majority of cases it should be postponed rather than precipitated; but your decision must, of course, depend on the nervous system of your own child, and your experience of his resistance to the effects of excitement. Hypersensitive children have been laid on beds of sickness for days after this crisis in their lives, and even while actually at the theatre emotion may easily rise above enjoyment point.

The attempt to guard against this over-

agitation by a careful selection of the play, excluding the more obviously exciting, is not necessarily much of a defence. It must be remembered that to a child the strangeness alone of the new setting is so enthralling; he is quivering in the grip of the intoxicating thrill of the theatre itself, quite apart from the particular performance taking place. Moreover, it is quite impossible to predict what kind of thing may strike him as most sensational, no play can be guaranteed unalarming to the uninitiated, and the mere music may excite him more than half a dozen murders.

Who does not remember the walk along the corridor, with its delicious tremors of expectation, and then—once within the magic precincts—the enraptured blinking at the general blaze and glitter—the musicians playing on one's very heart-strings—the awestruck staring at the solemn curtain (epitome of all mystery), and the shudder of delirious anticipation at its gradual undulating rise?

To a susceptible child the rise of that curtain will be the Open Sesame to realms of unimagined romance, from the glamour of which, at the end of his three ecstatic hours, he will

emerge in a state of stunned initiation far, far away from himself and his surroundings. The return to a humdrum existence should be softened to him, and his bewildered preoccupation condoned. For how well I remember the shock of coming out into the everyday world of omnibuses and schoolroom tea. You were in a dazed condition, and the apparent flatness of your own life compared with the glorious, however uncomfortable, fates of the heroic beings who had held you spellbound, was indeed hard to face, this parenthesis of one afternoon's experience seeming so much more real and significant than your own yesterdays and to-morrows.

Such an occasion is surely too immense to be repeated at short intervals. An impressionable child will have abundance of fancy's food to live on for some time to come, and quickly to superimpose another impression is to be prodigal of experience.

The type of child most satisfactory to take to the theatre will for a long while, so to speak, continue to chew the cud of the play, vibrating with the aftermath of his emotions and constantly enacting the part of the hero.

Thus his first play should not be regarded

merely as an afternoon's treat, for, however paltry, it will probably be his inspiration, his mental and emotional sustenance for weeks to come. This being so, it is surely well worth while waiting for one with some real beauty and not too much horror, and one which can be read beforehand, for anticipation will enhance rather than detract.

Careful discrimination in the choice of the first plays is desirable more for your own sake than for the effect on the child's immediate enjoyment. To him all that glitters will be gold, he brings his own fairy dust with him, but, as the words will be continually quoted, far better they should have some real quality.

A child permeated with something akin to poetry will be a better companion than one brimming over with pantomime patter, and, unconsciously, he will be acquiring a standard. Though trash may taste equally sweet at the time, a play touched with real imagination will provide him with more sustenance. Anything in the nature of a pageant will be greatly appreciated. I remember one of my first thoughts was always as to how many people were to appear on the stage, and the more

categories the programme promised, such as "soldiers," "citizens" and "courtiers," the better pleased I was.

Children who go to too many plays soon lose the rapture of complete illusion, and what a distressing sight is a prematurely *blasé* young theatre-goer! Shades of the prison-house are beginning to close for the child who, lolling back in his chair, distinguishes one actress from another—discussing her professional skill rather than the personality of the part she plays, and compares this year's with last year's performance. The spell is breaking once he becomes sufficiently detached to begin to criticize a play as a performance. To the happiest kind of child the illusion of the stage is at first so complete, that to attend a play is not so much merely to watch a spectacle as to participate in experience—to himself enter an arena. The emotion is practically direct rather than vicarious, for does he not identify himself with the hero through all his vicissitudes?

Instead of "Shall we go to *The Only Way*?" it would really be more apt to say, "Shall we *be* Sidney Carton?"

Later on will come other delights, such as

the fun of catching sight of things not intended to be seen—wires, lights and retreating scene-shifters, hearing the voice of the prompter, or detecting the make-up of the actress.

Enjoyable as are these more sophisticated pleasures, children should never be precipitated into the later phase, and "grown-up people" will therefore need to hold a careful censorship over their own conversation. Nowhere have they greater scope for iconoclasm. I can still remember my pain at being told Mark Antony's tears were only well-placed gelatine, and how greatly the information spoilt my emotional wallowing.

To be made aware of artifice was to become preoccupied by the trivial—mechanical details forcing themselves on your attention to a degree out of all proportion to their importance.

Then the derision and flippancy of some tactless "grown-ups"! What jarring offence can be given, what blissful emotions quenched, by their thoughtless remarks.

It should never be forgotten how very much ground may be lost with children over these first plays.

First and foremost, parents must remember

that to arrive late at the theatre is nothing short of cruelty to children. You should be generous with your treat, and let them be in time to hear the very first squeak of the orchestra. Tuning up is an eloquent invitation to rapture, and the sight of your children sitting in front of a curtain is not one to be missed. If it were about to rise on their own destiny, revealing their own wonderful fate, they could scarcely look more expectant.

What angry contempt one felt for the lost souls who preferred lingering over coffee to being punctual, and would deliberately elect to miss the first scene rather than cut short a cigar.

The fear of being late only ceased once you were safely seated, and even then there were many risks of having your feelings hurt. The cynical remarks, untimely laughs, and offensive yawns! Then the people who would look at one's face instead of at the stage, by their inattention disturbing one's own enjoyment. (I now know how difficult it is not to watch a child's expression, and have even had my chin seized and forcibly turned in the right direction by one fearful lest I should "miss something.")

Bad enough, too, to hear some one openly rejoicing that there were only four acts, when you yourself were feverishly scanning the programme in the wild hope that there might after all be six. Worst of all, that callous, practical groping for umbrella and coat before the last words were uttered, and the final fall of the curtain left you in possession of so very few of your faculties.

These are some of your chances for disgrace in taking the young to the theatre—apparently a ticklish business; but, fortunately, to fail to catch some of the delight of the child you accompany, is to prove yourself strangely impervious; and very little imagination and tact should prevent you from giving offence.

I suppose most children will begin their playgoing at afternoon performances, but another memorable milestone is the first evening they are allowed to sit up and go to a theatre at night.

Then the excitement of the play has no mean rival in their rapture at being out of bed so late, and every other minute how eagerly they will inquire, "What time is it *now*?"

To a child another great advantage of an

evening performance is that there is no such sorry anti-climax as needs must follow a *matinée*. Instead of returning with a headache to the tedious tail-end of a day, he comes out into spangled darkness, and directly he is home goes straight to bed, there to fall asleep, his impressions undisturbed by his own life, the sound of clapping still in his ears, and the insubstantial pageant only fading into his dreams.

XVII

AT THE ZOO

"When people call this beast to mind
They marvel more and more,
At such a little tail behind,
So large a trunk before."

HILAIRE BELLOC.

"How soon will he be able to go to the Zoo?" was one of the earliest of my maternal questionings. There is, of course, no minimum age limit. Perambulators being admitted, the very babiest may be pushed past cages; but it may well be an unprofitable pushing. What I wanted to know was the earliest age at which a child could reasonably be expected to "take notice" enough to give his mother and father the treat of watching him see the animals?

Experience has taught me that at two years old a child should be ready to begin this particular form of pandering to parents, though, of course, to get the maximum of vicarious enjoyment you will have to wait until he is much older and able to run from cage to cage with

appropriately shrill ejaculations of astonishment.

Certainly the blissful glamour of the first visit should not be too long postponed; though it is from later ones, with relatively mobile and articulate children, that you will be giving and getting the most fun.

For children from four upwards I defy any one to suggest a better way of spending a fine afternoon. You combine air and exercise with your sight-seeing; and interest, excitement and amusement are continuous. None of the fatigue—so closely allied to boredom—of a stuffy museum, but a walk with a crescendo of enjoyment, and, for yourself, all the fun of laughing with and at your children.

Weather is an important factor. It can easily be too cold for standing in stock-still contemplation, and the fatigue of an over-hot summer's day at the Zoo is not soon forgotten, monkeys seeming to make one feel the heat in a way that polar bears are powerless to allay. A long visit is a tiring affair, and for children too proud for prams, to sit on their exhausted mother's lap in a gently drawn bath-chair often proves a good all-round plan.

For the privileged, the accepted practice is to collect tickets from some member of the Zoological Society and wait until Sunday, when the gardens are only open to ticket-holders; but with the exception of Saturdays—which certainly is too crowded—my experience is that any day in the week is pleasanter than the so-called exclusive one.

Those fearful of infection can avoid germs by not entering any of the animal houses; and indeed there is plenty to be seen from outside, though to many children the interior of the Monkey House will always be the Holy of Holies.

For children the drama begins with the excitement of "clanketing" through the turnstile. I remember the thrill of its noisy admission and the curious sense of initiation it gave one. The Rubicon was crossed, and for better or worse you were "for it" in the regions of fur, feather and fin.

The adventure can by no means be guaranteed an unmitigated pleasure. Bitter-sweet are many of the joys of childhood, and the Zoo is a treat that may well miscarry. I have seen more bitterly disappointed parents in this arena

than even at the seaside. They anticipated gurgles of grateful glee, and are appalled by yells of terror. Lions and tigers may be all very well in picture-books, but many children, dismayed at seeing them materialize, are apt to agree that

> "Stone walls do not a prison make,
> Nor iron bars a cage."

No easy matter to allay their fears. "When I was at home I was in a better place," will be the only opinion of a terrified child. Others, not in the least alarmed, will be disappointed by their failure to establish terms with the animals. Their part seems too passive, and their egotism is subtly snubbed.

I have seen tears shed over the inability to catch a lion's eye, to take an elephant home, or to play in the "monkeys' nursery."

To some children the pleasures of mere observation are not sufficient entertainment. Something more in the nature of a definite performance is expected. "But when are they going to eat the *man*?" I overheard a little girl ask, after impatiently watching a keeper pushing bones into the lions' den.

Others again take the Zoo to be a super toy-

shop, and are audibly annoyed when told none of the animals are for sale.

Some—a minute minority—precociously imaginative and sympathetic, are distressed by seeing creatures in captivity. They discern the misery through the mischief of monkeys, are haunted by the pathos of their expressions, and, stirred to indignation by "tamed and shabby tigers," they long to restore them to the jungle, to liberate lions and emancipate eagles.

But of all types of children, the most disappointing to take to the Zoo are the apathetic. Presenting a suet countenance to animal after animal, they deny astonishment to the hump of a camel, the trunk of an elephant, or any of nature's most startling designs; will take more interest in a cage or a keeper than in any of the specimens, or perhaps become perversely absorbed in the flight of a common sparrow.

The majority of children will, however, be satisfactorily appreciative. Themselves in the seventh heaven of happiness, their faces and voices should go far towards carrying their parents with them. There is no more enchanting sight and sound than children really

revelling in the Zoo; and what fun it is for grown-ups to hear their desperate attempts at classification. They may know only two or three names, and the most ineligible specimens will have to be squeezed into these accommodating categories. "Bow-wow" and "Gee-gee" carry the young naturalist a long way, but I have detected a pathetic note of diffidence—a lack of conviction—in the tentative "Pussy" (the only remaining label) with which the hippopotamus is sometimes hailed.

Plenty of ammunition should be carried. Who has forgotten the joy of combining the delights of "Aunt Sally," and of patronage by pelting bears with buns?

A short lecture on diet is to the good, or a lion's rejection of a well-meant nut may give offence. I remember suffering pangs of mortification over my unappreciated catering.

The star-turn never to be missed is the feeding of the sea-lions. Find out their meal time and be morbidly punctual. Surely the child is yet unborn who would not be delighted by the staccato barks of hunger—the floundering splashes, the simultaneous diving and gobbling of these pre-eminently well-tailored animals.

So gracefully greedy—so rapaciously acrobatic!

But don't decide what your child is to enjoy most. Leave him free to distribute his time and attention according to the degree of attraction exercised by individual animals. Impossible to guess what may most appeal to him, his sense of values being totally different to your own. Quite likely he will be more excited at recognizing the "harmless necessary cat" in the dignity of a cage than by his introduction to the hippo in his pomp and panoply of hideousness. Not even the neck of the giraffe can be guaranteed to make a sensation.

There are some inconvenient uncles who, by injudicious bribery, court the most uncomfortable privileges. They should be left at home. Of course there are exceptions, but I cannot believe many small children really enjoy having the *entrée* to a wild animal's At Home—shaking hands with a gorilla, cuddling a cub, or stroking a snake. Either they will be frightened (such liberties were the tip-top terrors of my childhood) or familiarity will breed contempt, and the creatures be stripped of much of their glamour. No, the beaten track at the Zoo should more than suffice for children's feet,

leaving all such bypaths of exotic experience to sadder and wiser ones.

One child's bane is another child's boon, and "rides" at the Zoo present bliss or misery according to their different natures. Take care tactfully to ascertain their real feelings, for many will be loath to acknowledge their fears. The most dreaded "treat" of all my childhood was being perched, quaking and giddy, on a swaying, wrinkling elephant, or painfully pressed against the sliding, hairy hump of a camel. It was, of course, good to "tea-out" on afterwards, but the price was too high. However, to many boys and girls so exalted a position will be a source of supreme delight and pride. Don't assume they are nervous. To some children a certain degree of fear is pleasurable, and its conquest a thrilling pride. Watch their faces and listen to their voices as the elephant heaves into sight. To a sympathetic observer they are bound to betray themselves, and if anxiety really settles in their eyes, far better save their pride by a timely change of programme. Begin with a ride in the llama-cart, far the least frightening form of locomotion provided.

Any trifling with the trunk of an elephant was, I think, what most terrified me. How I hated the moist feel of that soft, twitching, sea-anemone-like purse at the dread end of it! I felt it would have a so much better use for me myself than for the inadequately proportioned bun I tremblingly proffered; and there was no message of reassurance in the incredibly tiny eye above. I would sooner have been eaten than confess my dread, but this doing the lady bountiful to "dear Jumbo" was a grim running of the gauntlet, and it was a great relief to find summer officially over and elephants no longer earning their livings, but safely interned in stately stalls!

To judge from my own reminiscences, the privilege of initiating a child into the joys of the Zoo evidently requires telepathy as well as no little tact. Like every new experience in childhood, it should certainly be carefully "edited" beforehand, for it is far too startling to the sensibilities of an unprepared child.

XVIII

A DAY IN THE TRAIN

"*And charging along like troops in a battle,*
All through the meadows the horses and cattle:
All of the sights of the hill and the plain
Fly as thick as driving rain;
And ever again, in the wink of an eye,
Painted stations whistle by."

R. L. STEVENSON.

A JOURNEY is certainly one of the occasions on which it is an advantage to be the child of the party. Spared all the fever and fret of planning, packing and paying, his rôle is so agreeably passive a one. True, many of his most precious possessions have been ruthlessly swallowed by trunks, and the tempers of those in authority are apt to grow rather short; but, all aglow with excitement, he will be impervious to pinpricks, and probably revel in the prevailing pandemonium.

The love of mere change as an end in itself is almost universal to children. However happy they may be, however perfectly placed, the

prospect of "going away" always fills them with joyful anticipation. Quite a week before the move they are on tiptoe for a flight, and soon begin to clamour to know how much longer they must wait with their prematurely-packed handbags proudly clutched. "How many more days is it still?" "How many more times shall I have to go to bed *here*?" "When will Tuesday come?" "Is it to-morrow now?"

They might be awaiting release from the most painful prison, so feverish are their questions.

Perhaps the kind and hospitable aunt they are visiting, and her indulgent cook, are a little saddened by their frantic impatience to be gone; but no offence is meant, and none should be taken. At a certain age any change is a change to the better, and the parting guests are merely exhilarated by the sense of adventure and filled with glee at the prospect of anything so unusual, so routine-smashing, as a whole day in the train.

To the parents the thought of a long journey is by no means so alluring. Apart from the depressing expense of moving a well-stocked nursery, the process is generally fraught with

fatigue and fuss, and often streaked with embarrassment. To begin with, what an amazing amount of paraphernalia attends the removal! On the eve of departure their house suggests impending emigration; and—as the station bus creaks away under its swaying burden of perambulator, bath, cot and all the strange bulky luggage nurse decrees indispensable, the stoutest hearts may well quail at the prospect of the "sly, slow hours" to be endured before the remote destination is reached.

In addition to what are said to be necessary luxuries, there will be a considerable amount of extra impedimenta. Probably a bird—from whose cage sand will profusely shower—and as likely as not a cramped cat mewing in a basket. Certainly there will be several comic toys, too precious to be packed—Billykins, Teddy bears, whatever may happen to be favourites of the moment. These must on all accounts travel "loose," but may well be left to an embarrassed grown-up to carry through the crowded station. A father with so absurd an armful, holding the tickets in his mouth, and with his other arm hauling a child past the lure of the automatic machines, does not usually look his happiest.

As for the small travellers, the pleasures of experience are apt to fall far short of those of anticipation. We all know that in the train children must be fidgety, and may be frightened, cross, ill or naughty. Owing to fatigue, their fall, from the highest spirits to the depth of despair, can be so startlingly abrupt. But, as in all the vicissitudes of childhood, how much can be done in the way of alleviation by skilful editing of the situation. Certainly to any child, say over three years old, the long-awaited treat of a whole day in the train should prove an enjoyable experience as well as a great adventure. He will even feel something of a hero. I remember the sort of brave feeling that came over me when, at an unnaturally early hour, my boots were buttoned on for the day.

The sense that a journey is an opportunity for creditable distinction, giving no little scope for honourable endeavour, should be encouraged for all it is worth. It will shed a glamour over the whole proceeding, making it more of a treat to the children and less of an ordeal to their attendants. Thanks to its influence on general behaviour, journeys may well take their place

amongst the happiest of family memories. Nothing is easier than to put a young traveller on his mettle. Tell him his mother is tired with packing, his nurse occupied with the baby, that it is up to him to help every one, and you enlist an ally who may do much to lighten the heat and burden of the day by his prompt and cheerful obedience. Let "travelling without tears" be the motto, and he will arrive tired but triumphant.

Younger children are apt to be badly frightened by the shock of an engine screeching into the station. Nerves may well be upset for the rest of the day to the banishment of the much wished-for sleep. They should be well prepared for the noise beforehand by playing as realistic games as possible at home, such as "Puffing Billy" and, if possible, by being taken to a station to be gradually familiarized with the otherwise appalling monsters of steel and smoke. In the case of babies too young to be susceptible to explanation and very sensitive to any startling noise, it is often a wise measure to stuff their ears with cotton-wool. Thus the most infernal sounds may be peacefully slept through.

It is a great advantage when the family party can monopolize a whole third-class carriage. Parents are then spared the additional anxiety as to what acts of aggression may be committed on strangers. By engaging four seats you are supposed to be able to reserve the entire compartment, but you can never rely on this privilege being respected. Much can be done by a judicious tip to the guard, and one has heard of such unscrupulous methods as loud assumed coughing and sneezing, or really spectacular naughtiness! An empty third-class carriage can really be converted into a very good temporary home, and you will have the great advantage of choice in the opening and shutting of windows.

Science has brought one great boon to the travelling nursery, for with the Thermos flask we are at least spared the difficulties and dangers of the spirit-lamp which made journeys with bottle-dependent babies trying ordeals punctuated by alarming crises.

For the first half-hour or so most children will sit stock still wrapped in the enjoyment of the motion and all the sights rushing past the window.

"Faster than fairies, faster than witches,
Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches!"

The mere fact of being in the train is in itself an enthralling occupation. But this stage is too good to last. Soon "Tell me a story" will fall like a knell to peace on the ears of the novel-absorbed mother, and unless she obliges, fidgets are bound to ensue. The children will start repeatedly pulling down the blinds and releasing them to spring up with that flapping noise so strangely disturbing to less amiable fellow-travellers. They will proceed to climb up into the racks provided for "light articles only," and their fingers will itch to tug the communication cord. When there is a corridor it can be resorted to, and this will be a great relief to cramped limbs; and, of course, the visits of the ticket collector will be much appreciated, his fascinating profession probably being settled on for future careers. If you want to make a small child really pleased and proud, do give him his own ticket to keep and proffer for the pleasing punch.

Any tunnel that they are lucky enough to go through is an experience worth gloating over, and, if the weather is favourable, the rain-drops

will run riveting races down the windows. This will fascinate children for quite a long time, but sooner or later the "grown-ups" will probably, in self-defence, have to come to the rescue. Reading aloud will be found very fatiguing to the voice, but there are many games requiring practically no equipment. Noughts and Crosses held me spellbound for ages, and there are many similar ones. The best of all train games doesn't even require pencil and paper. This is looking out at opposite windows and seeing who can count the greatest number of animals. I remember the breathless excitement at the sight of a flock of sheep or a flight of starlings. So well was this game played with me, that only years afterwards and with a pang of disillusionment did it occur to me that my mother's object in playing it had been to keep me quiet and not to amuse herself.

Meals are, of course, the great entertainment and resource, and the longer they are spun out the better, leaving the interval between lunch and tea as short as possible. The picnic basket must be well thought out, and knives and forks left behind, the treat of eating in one's fingers being three parts of the fun. I recommend a

cold chicken cut up, for who has forgotten the bliss of gnawing a drumstick? Hard-boiled eggs are un-messy and generally very popular; bananas easy to eat with decorum, and gingerbread nuts are an excellent occupation, especially when they have reached the soft plasticine-like stage. However complete your provisions, don't omit to buy penny buns, no journey is complete without them; and as well as the fun of eating them, you will also have their paper bags to burst.

If money were no object and the luxury of sleepers could be afforded, it might be found wisest and less disturbing to routine to travel by night. Most nurses consider small babies less upset this way than by a long day in the train, as in the dark they will probably sleep from door to door.

To older children a night journey is, of course, an adventure of unsurpassable glamour. They will be all right in an ordinary third-class carriage, as they can be spread out along the seats, but it is very tiring for their mother or nurse to have to spend the whole night in the perpendicular.

However, if possible, every child should be

allowed to experience the romance of at least one night-journey before he emerges from the most susceptible age. How wonderful it was to go rattling along all night on the threshold of sleep! It is an excitement not to be missed, one of the very best opportunities for the exercise of that invaluable faculty for transmuting the unusual into the glorious, which is one of the great blessings of childhood.

XIX

SHOPPING

"It is easy to take a child to a shop, but hard to get him away."—Old Proverb.

I am sure that for a great number of children, many of their fastest heart-beatings must be associated with the inside and the outside of shops.

The hungry boy flattening his nose against the plate-glass window of a pork-pie merchant, and the one, rich in all save pocket-money, who has set his heart on some unobtainable toy, each of these knows the very excess of longing.

If only going out shopping could reassert the spell it once exercised over me, how pleasant instead of painful would be the prospect of my Monday-morning duties.

Certainly to me as a small child every sort of shop was stocked with an extraordinary romance. I don't know which held the most charm, the small or the immense, the empty

or the thronged. There was the homely little village one, to which you hurried after lessons, your hoarded pennies clutched in your hand. As you opened the door a bell loudly clanged and summoned the trading housewife, interrupted from her cooking, to attend to you and you alone.

This was gratifying to the Londoner accustomed to waiting in a queue for attention, and so was her volubility whilst with a piece of wood she fished for bulls' eyes in a deep bottle and then weighed them on a huge pair of kitchen scales, before wrapping them up in a wisp of the advertisement sheet of a newspaper, printed letters from which you afterwards found adhering to the sticky sweets.

This primitive establishment was very enjoyable, but then how thrilling were also the first visits to one of the vast glittering emporiums —"calico-hells," as the disillusioned call them —in which I used to feel quite as excited and distracted as a terrier in a rabbit warren. There every commodity which could possibly be required from cradle to coffin was dazzlingly displayed, and with what pleasurable awe did I gape at the gorgeous goods, at the liveried

attendants who wafted me up in lifts, and at the immaculate wax figures clad in such wonderful clothes.

At last the right department was reached, and in a dazed condition one found oneself perched up on a very high chair in front of a man who wore a pencil in his ear and appeared to be resting his whole weight on the two large thumbs spread out on the counter.

The serried rows of white cardboard boxes were then disarranged entirely on your account and reluctant gloves forced on to your fingers—fingers which tried so hard to stand firm, but continually gave way at the knuckles. When, after many struggles, you were "suited," how admirable was the rapidity with which the owner of the thumbs and the pencil first made such very impressive cabalistic signs on his transfer paper and then packed your purchase.

These were the occasions on which you were being taken out shopping without any commercial schemes of your own, and were just expected to be as passive as a parcel.

Certain goods had to be chosen for you, and your part was only to do that which you were told, to present various parts of your person

for trying on, and to refrain from touching any of the wares.

In a large shop, opportunities for really sensational disobedience abound, and a child's potentialities for disturbance are never greater. Consider how easy it is for him with one single shove to upset a hundred safety pins or a thousand peppermint creams!

Temptations beset one sorely, and there was also always the fear of the awful fate of getting lost in one of these huge labyrinths. This once happened to me when I was four years old, and for five minutes I rushed about in absolute terror of being sold and packed.

But the really exciting occasions were those on which you had come out to make your own purchases and had to go through all the agonies of the exercise of choice, as to how best to lay out your small stock of money. How vividly I remember that flushing sense of a sudden accession of wealth which came over me when, in order to buy something for a penny, I broke into my new shilling, wrapped up in tissue paper, and was handed back a silver sixpence and five huge coppers.

One of the things concerning children of

which you cannot too often remind yourself is the tremendous momentousness of the decisions they have to make during these shopping expeditions, especially when it is the choosing of Christmas presents which is occupying their attention.

Then the critical situation is often further complicated by the presence of some one for whom it is essential that they should procure a *surprise* present; this with the scarcity of funds and the lack of any comfortable conviction, combine to give them very flushed faces and glittering eyes. It is on these occasions sadly easy to hurt their feelings by laughing at their hesitating between alternatives of trash, or by trying impatiently to hurry them into a decision—to you so very unimportant.

Whenever the boredom of having to wait standing on weary feet in a crowded shop becomes too trying, I remind myself of how, at their age, I used to lie awake at night wondering which of two Christmas cards it would be best to send to my aged uncle. Would he prefer the one displaying a robin redbreast carrying a spray of mistletoe in his beak, or that equally lovely one decorated with a silver horseshoe

threaded with blue ribbon? Advice, if I sought it, was sure to be conflicting, and a verdict from tossing up failed to give me any real conviction. It is really wonderful how sympathetic on the whole attendants are to child-customers; even in all the fever and fret of Christmas week their patience seems very seldom to give out. I am quite touched when I remember with what apparent concentration—when it had come to my last ninepence—they would assist me to decide between the conflicting appeals of a paper-knife or a paper-weight—a pen-holder or a pen-wiper.

In one way and another I don't think there was any arena in which grown-up people astonished me more than they did in shops. At the age when the one point in growing up seemed to lie in the fact that one would acquire full liberty in matters of eating and drinking—even be able to consume as many ices or meringues as one chose at a sitting—how astonishing it was to see the absurd way in which these privileged beings wasted their golden opportunities. One knew they had money, could one not see the reassuring bulges in their purse? Yet quite often, without so

much as looking either to the right or to the left, they would scurry through the confectionery straight on to the drapery department. How inexplicably perverse it seemed that they should spend their lovely half-crowns on calico instead of on chocolate, and their time in the turnery instead of in the toy department.

Quite another kind of shopping, but one which also held great charm, was when you were staying at the seaside and were allowed to go out and assist with the day's marketing, bringing the meat for your luncheon home—meat as surprisingly red as the shrimps were surprisingly un-red. A grocer's shop was wonderfully attractive too, and one of my favourite privileges was to be permitted to pick out my own half a pound of mixed biscuits.

Having tea in a shop is also a great treat to children. I loved the little marble-topped tables and the sight of éclairs in glass cases; the only drawback being the final embarrassing catechism as to the number of cakes I had consumed.

But most exciting of all shopping dramas, was when a pirate-ship, a fire-engine or whatever then unobtainable treasure it was, the sight

of which had excited your longing, had been patiently saved up for halfpenny by halfpenny, and the day at last arrived on which, the necessary sum amassed, purse in hand in breathless anxiety you reached the shop, found it still there (your mother, to avoid appalling disappointment, having secretly ordered it already) and in triumph carried your glorious possession home.

No surprise toy was ever so much enjoyed and gloated over as the long awaited one.

Immediately to buy a child whatever takes his fancy is to do him out of such an accumulation of enjoyment as can only accompany something long desired, the final acquisition of which has been so wonderfully sweetened by almost despairing suspense.

XX

DRESSING-UP

"He struck his milk-white hand against a nail
Sees his own blood and feels his courage fail.
Ah, where is now that boasted valour flown?
Achilles weeps, great Hector hangs his head!
And the Black Prince goes whimpering to bed."

MARY LAMB.

NEXT to those so oft-repeated words, "Please tell me a story," and "I don't want to go to bed," "May I dress-up?" is probably the phrase most frequently on children's lips.

Certainly the taste for fancy dress—one of the earliest nursery developments—is shared by all children, and, as a matter of fact, very few of their parents or grandparents ever completely outgrow it. The sense of the romance and humour of personal disguise, the attempt by the alteration of appearance to escape from the confines of your own individuality, seems common to all humanity.

In spite of the aspersions cast on their efficacy, fine feathers have at least the power to make birds *feel* fine; and though children

greatly enjoy making an impression on other people, they would still dress-up, even were there no hope of an audience.

Neither would they be doing it merely for the fun and satisfaction of seeing themselves in the glass. For theirs is a vanity more subtle than that of Narcissus, their subconscious motive being to take themselves in far more than any one else, and it is for their own benefit that they appropriate the psychological attributes of the characters they impersonate.

Notice how often they say, "I want to be so and so," not, "I want to be like so and so."

The actors are their own audience, the illusion is well-nigh complete, and they take all the credit for the triumphs of the gallery figures whose appearances and mannerisms they ape.

That is why they are for ever strutting about as warriors and brigands, their histrionic hearts swelling with a sense of their own derring do.

"And with new joy and pride, the little actor cons another part."

Theirs is the enviable capacity, so thoroughly to impose on themselves, that they are all aglow with a glory delightfully unearned.

Perch a paper crown on the head of the "six years' darling of a pigmy size," and behold him feeling every inch a king.

And the chubby child of three years old, whom one knows to be adorably timid—terrified even by tea-party crackers—once dressed up as a pirate, will be shamelessly full of bluster, assuming a swaggering gait and a bass voice. In spite of his acknowledged fear of the tiny explosion of crackers, thanks to his belt and slouch hat, he now walks clad in all the dignity of one quite at home amid the roar of cannon.

Intoxicated with triumph and self-admiration, he has completely thrown himself into his *beau rôle*, and is without any disturbing self-consciousness as to the incongruity so delightful to onlookers. Is there anything more deliciously comic than these diminutive dramatists? To hear the crystal tinklings of a treble voice trying to be terrible, to see the assumed ferocity on a baby-face, the fierce frown on his bulging brow, the glare of eyes hopelessly round, and the crinkling of his tiny nose as he clenches a dimpled fist and stamps with a foot light as a leaf!

There could be no more enchanting instance of

> "Thou whose exterior semblance doth belie
> Thy soul's immensity."

Though children, for the most part, dress-up far more with the wish to impress than to amuse—their aspiration being towards the glamorous rather than towards the comic, yet they will be very quick to appreciate the joke of other people's fancy dress.

That nucleus of humour, the sense of the incongruous (in others), seems to exist extraordinarily early. Very young babies will rock with amusement at the time-honoured joke of Mother in Daddy's hat; Nannie has only to place a napkin on her head to set the bells of laughter pealing; and even the cat and the rocking-horse will be continually having costumes tried on.

No doubt so immemorial an instinct would assert itself in every family without any incentive from the suggestions of presiding "grown-ups," but it is just as well to encourage its development and to contribute towards the "properties" required. On no account should so enjoyable a tendency ever be snubbed.

Nothing more wounding to the feelings than for a fancy dress to fall flat. What a douche of cold water on a blaze of excitement! To come into the room, disguised with the aid of all the quill pens in the house and some lip salve, as a Red Indian, only to find the "grown-ups" too preoccupied to turn round, is indeed to taste the bitterness of disappointment, and to feel as ridiculously small as you look. For all the stalwart support of auto-suggestion, children do need an audience, and sympathetic appreciation and astonishment should always be shown to each successive impersonation. One of the many reasons for preferring the kitchen to the drawing-room is the superior ovation there accorded to dressing-up.

"I was a giant, but nobody noticed," is indeed a pathetic phrase.

Applause is one's first duty; but the most practical method of aiding and abetting children in satisfying this elementary form of craving for romance, is to have a chest in which all odds and ends which could possibly be used for purposes of dressing-up are carefully collected.

Practically anything will deserve a place; discarded garments, derelict curtains, wisps of

material, all should meet in this heterogeneous assortment. Innumerable things—otherwise condemned as rubbish—may here resurrect and give the greatest delight. Thus to make yourself into an amateur theatrical costumier is really a measure of self-defence. Unless some provision be made, you must be prepared to find your bedroom constantly converted into a green-room. Your cupboards will be ransacked, your scarves used as turbans, your best hats as helmets, your silk stockings as tights. Far better formally consign your cast-off clothes to distinguished survival after death as fancy dress.

Mufti will go a long way, but you can also let some Christmas and birthday presents take the form of the toy "outfits" displayed in shops. They are not expensive, and nothing gives greater pleasure than one of these, be it the get up of a bus-conductor, a cowboy, a jester, or a fireman.

As the possibilities of a burnt cork are bound to be discovered sooner or later, parents had much better seize the credit by themselves initiating their children into the joys of its proper use.

One of the greatest treats of childhood was thus making one's face hideous by embellishing it with preposterous moustachios, beard and whiskers.

Masks will probably have a phase of extreme popularity, but making your own faces by self-distortion is a far more lasting pleasure.

There are, of course, drawbacks to the custom of dressing-up, children being so apt to get inconveniently carried away by their parts at the most unpropitious moments. The mask, as it were, sticks to the face and, to the consternation of strangers, the actors are liable to go on behaving in character. Fierce feathers make fierce birds, and the boy who has been impersonating a pirate for the last few days may well assault some unfortunate child in the Park, his indignant protest, "But I'm not playing with you!" being of but little protection.

These tendencies need supervision and tactful control. So potential a weapon as make-believe must be adroitly caught by its handle and turned to your own advantage.

Encourage your child to select his parts from amongst the more reputable of sensational characters, and then insist on the obligations

as well as the privileges incurred. If he must needs be a robber, let him at least favour Robin Hood rather than Bill Sikes; if his predilection is to be a warrior, then cast him for the part of a merciful knight. *Noblesse oblige* and the sacredness of symbols must be ceaselessly dinned into him, and he must realize that he cannot "have it both ways." If he is allowed to wear that odious tin sword, then he must firmly refrain from crying when he is either hurt or in want of something, and the laws of chivalry must be assiduously practised, weapons being always confiscated from unworthy hands.

Properly handled, dressing-up may thus become an invaluable incentive as well as an inexhaustible pastime. Even in real life, the extraordinary moral effect of clothes on children is so apparent. Was there ever a boy who was not inspired, and temporarily ennobled, by his first pair of "chowsers"?

XXI

A CHILDREN'S PARTY

"*A party in a parlour sat—all silent and all damned.*"
SHELLEY.

ONE of the minor disappointments quite common to mothers, is to find that the children whom they so delight to exhibit do not care for going to parties.

It seems that many boys and girls are too old to enjoy these entertainments almost directly they cease to be too young—the right age apparently being passed in a twinkling. So soon as they grow out of being frightened, they become bored and would much prefer to have a chosen friend to play with them at home. "*Must* I go to a party this week?" was a question I was asked the other day.

For me the chief glamour of that kind of going out to tea, which involved taking shoes and a hairbrush in a bag, lay in the prospect of the deliciously un-everyday food—the strawberries and cream, iced coffee, and all the coloured cake with little silver balls. It was

no special pleasure to be one of a large crowd of children, and I don't remember particularly looking forward to the possible Punch and Judy or the games. My expectations of enjoyment were almost entirely derived from the pleasures of the table, and even these were sadly overshadowed by the doom of having to say "Good-bye" and "Thank you" to my hostess before I could go home.

To the children of to-day—owing to greater licence, so much less rapturously greedy than were their mothers—even the attractions of good things to eat and drink must be considerably weakened.

However, there are, of course, many boys and girls naturally endowed with the taste for crowds, best clothes and organized revelry. These delight in parties, pleasing their hostess by their sparkling eyes, stimulated spirits and happy laughter, and making up for the cataleptic appearance of others, very likely at home the most brimming over with life. In any case this form of entertainment is likely to continue to flourish, for tables can be made to groan at a relatively trifling expense when children only are to be catered for. Some

definite form of entertainment, such as a conjuror or a cinematograph, is usually provided; but this, though very popular, is by no means an indispensable expense.

The *one* golden rule is that the first item on the programme must be tea. No entertainment, games or dancing should ever be attempted until the ice has been broken by feasting. And how extraordinarily thick the ice can be on these occasions!

At the beginning of a party, a glance round the room will show you that most of the children might each be on a separate island for any interchange of thought or emotion that is taking place. Insulated in shy self-consciousness, how coldly they glare at one another, not even reaching that early phase of contemporary acquaintance which consists in abrupt interrogations: "How old are you?" "What's your name?"

Then are not the mothers apt to be too exclusively riveted by their own offspring to contribute much to the general gaiety? They seem uncomfortably preoccupied as to how their darlings may behave in the fierce light that beats upon a party, and, perhaps a little

conscious that the heroes of home are here but as pebbles on the beach, are over-inclined to confide, to inattentive ears, that their children are not looking their best to-day.

Nurses, too, have a tendency to be more competitive than is compatible with their own comfort, and to take any praise of another's charge as disparagement of their own.

Small children at tea—their faces so comically close to their plates—present an amusing contrast to their parents engaged in a meal. Blinkers would not be in their way, for they take no thought of their neighbours. None of that perfunctory making of conversation, but, in its place, a complete concentration on the business of eating—no silent business though, for their whole bodies seem engaged in the process, and there are many heaving sighs and breathless pants and puffs. When a cup has to be held in two hands, wide eyes floating upwards just above its brim, the gulping is apt to be very loud, and, at the end of a long draught, the drinker has all the appearance of having run a race.

Children are divided into those who eat too much and those who eat too little, so an of-

ficial censor should stand behind each chair; amiable strangers, who will not have to reap their sowing, being inclined to overply them, ransacking each table for its richest dainties. A pleasing sight these rapt rows of solemn munchers—their thoughts on the cake after next!

Crackers are the traditional ornament of children's teas, adding much to the general festiveness; but to many of the younger ones they are the thorns in the rose, so pathetically frightened are they by the midget explosions.

I remember when the question, "Will there be crackers?" sprang to my lips at the first mention of a party. The wish was not the father to the thought, their trashy contents making no amends for the painful ordeal of their pulling.

Immediately after tea is the right time for whatever entertainment is to take place. The old-fashioned conjuror, who produced white rabbits from a top hat and extracted miles of gaily-coloured ribbon from his mouth, has for the most part given place to one reinforced by the arts of ventriloquism. He is usually supported by an ugly doll—the delight of some

children and the dread of others—and will generally give some little boy the chance of feeling, according to his nature, either covered with glory or with confusion, by asking him to step forward and "assist" in the performance of some trick.

I think the children of to-day enjoy a well-chosen cinema almost better than anything else; but the tiny ones are apt to be frightened or bored by any sort of entertainment, and they should never be forced to attend. In fact, where there is much discrepancy in ages, it is really far wiser to separate the babies from the older children. A room should be set aside for them and one enlightened grown-up person appointed to preside. There need be no straining after originality. Nothing more blissful will ever be invented than those inspired classics, "Ring-a-Ring a Roses," and "Here we go round the Mulberry Bush." They have unfailing charm, and are peacefully devoid of the competitive element found even in "Nuts in May" and "Oranges and Lemons." In some games the happiness of the few is so much built on the disappointment of the many.

At the palpitating close of Musical Chairs there are a great many glum faces round the room. Yet this is too good a game to forego, the very oldest and biggest becoming carried away by its drama, and sometimes finding it difficult to be chivalrous to the small and frail.

The hostess's aim (no mean one) should be much laughter and *no tears*. If there are to be no bumps, no frights, no disappointments, she must look to it that floors are not too slippery, conjurors too dramatic, nor games too heart-burning.

Once tea and the ensuing entertainment are over, there need not be very much organizing of the elder children. Tongues will now be loosened and the intervals between the set games had better be fairly long, for, in the blessed state of merriment, children seem to delight in just "swarming."

Music should be provided, and some will dance; but many, equally happy, will merely rush to and fro, or pirouette and slide, much to the disturbance of those more formally engaged.

At the really successful children's party, it should be impossible, on entering the room, to say exactly what was going on. Like so many

starlings, the children's movements should defy definition, and at this stage great care will have to be taken to see that none of the smaller ones are sent spinning by their exhilarated seniors.

Nothing is more conducive to high spirits than those lovely coloured air balloons—we make a great mistake in not having them at our own dinner parties—and each child should be given a large one on a long string; but there must be some in reserve, for they are sadly ephemeral. The gas-filled ones, now available, are more durable, but I think they have far less wayward grace.

That time-honoured treat, a bran-pie, holds delight and glamour for children of all ages. It has delicious mystery, and burrowing, with beating heart, for the little lurking parcels appeals to the latent gambling instincts. It is an anxious moment for parents—children being inclined to use both hands, and to present themselves uninvited for a second helping. There should be two pies, one filled for those over, the other for those under, five years old. It is easier to divide presents by their suitability to age than as to whether they are for boys or girls, toys being for the most part

neuter; but for a large party the best plan is to have four divisions.

Now, with the newly unpacked treasures tightly clutched, is the time to say "Good-bye"; and as the children file past their hostess she should be rewarded for her pains by gleams from happy sparkling eyes, the stony stare of arrival having on most faces long since dissolved in the glow of rapture.

XXII

THE FAMILY DOCTOR

"Doctor So-much-the-Worse, and Doctor All-the-Better."—La Fontaine.

Being obliged to edit your own case to the doctor, instead of enjoying *Punch* and the *Illustrated News* in his waiting-room whilst your mother did all the talking, ranks high amongst the many disadvantages of becoming a "grown-up." I think it brings your regrettable independence home to you even more forcibly than does the necessity of paying his bill out of your own money. Still sadder are the occasions on which bedridden, but powerless to abdicate, you have to make a sore throat worse by yourself telling of its soreness, instead of, as before, lying passive and important while gratifying whisperings were heard on the other side of the screen. As for the barley-water, how much sweeter it tasted in the days when it automatically appeared at your bedside than it ever does now that you have to order it for yourself.

And yet, in spite of the Paradise Lost of such irresponsibility, I remember how intensely the sufferings of childish illnesses were magnified by my dread of a visit from the doctor. In my infantile imagination he loomed as a kind of grim personification of all the horrors and humiliations of illness, and my agonized shyness at the entrance of the black-coated stranger, armed with his terrifying mysteries of stethoscope and thermometer, was a cruel addition to such miseries as feeling sick and burning hot.

I remember my pained bewilderment at receiving so unusual a command as "Put out your tongue." Then the astounding questions he would ask—and why, oh why, make one begin counting at 99—then cut one short with a brusque "That will do," and plunge a spoon down one's throat? Before relieving the room of his presence he would scribble cabalistic signs on a piece of paper, so I knew who it was I had to thank for all the nasty tastes of the next few days.

Sometimes the dreaded visitant was stern and awesome—reminding me of "Tall Agrippa." On other occasions he appeared clothed in an even worse jocularity, and, rubbing his hands,

would inquire, "How are we to-day?" Why *we?* I well remember my puzzled ponderings over that plural pronoun.

Was I never ill twice in the same place, or did no doctor succeed in giving satisfaction to those in authority?

Whatever the explanation, familiarity was never given a chance to breed any comfortable contempt, for every one of my many illnesses was penalized by a strange doctor.

How different would my feelings have been had I known him, so to speak, off the stage; had he been a familiar figure of ordinary life, instead of an abnormal one exclusively associated with feeling ill and nasty-tasting medicines. As it was, so much did I misunderstand his mission to my bedside, that I'm told that, when very tiny I once asked whether "the thermometer man who had given me the rash" was coming again.

I feel sure much unnecessary suffering would be saved if—after carefully choosing the doctor they intend to call in for illnesses—parents would take their children to see him when they are well. This may sound a counsel of extravagance, but, apart from any consideration of the

children's nerves, is it not obviously of great value for the doctor to be acquainted with them in their normal condition, so that he may know how much colour and vivacity are natural to them?

The more understanding he has of their constitutions and their characters before any actual crisis arises, the easier it will be for him when the time comes to diagnose and prescribe.

A small child need have no suspicion as to the object of the visit, he can easily be left under the impression that he is just going to see a "kind friend of Mother's," and on no account should his health or lack of it be discussed in his presence. If he hears any weaknesses spoken of with resignation, he may take a wan pride in his inability to "keep anything down" or "do with excitement," and standing orders will thus be conveyed to his unconscious self. In any case, whenever the doctor is visiting one member of the family, the opportunity of letting the others see him outside the sick room should always be taken, and, if he is fortunate in his manner, very few encounters should enable him to set future patients at their ease.

There can be nothing more conducive to a mother's peace of mind than the knowledge that, at the end of the telephone, she has a doctor in whose skill she has complete confidence, and who, instead of being an alarming stranger, is an affectionate and welcome friend to her children.

Yes, I'm sure the importance of getting to know your doctor before illness makes a visit imperative, cannot be too strongly urged; besides which—quite apart from the value in illness of previous acquaintance—it is essential that every child, however apparently healthy, should at a very early age, and afterwards at regular intervals, be thoroughly overhauled.

I do not mean for a moment that childhood should by any means be regarded as an illness in itself, but it must never be forgotten how very misleading appearances may be, and the absence of any latent troubles—such as at first are only to be detected by a trained eye—should periodically be ascertained.

The very fatness on which parents sometimes congratulate themselves may well be concealing rickets—the symptoms of which are often postponed, and many other physical

defects, such as slight curvature of the spine or a tendency to flat feet, become increasingly difficult to correct each year that treatment is delayed.

When the time comes for the doctor's first bedside visit, his mission should be very tactfully explained to the children. They must be expecting him to make them feel well again, and their faith in his magician powers will enlist invaluable co-operation from auto-suggestion.

His visit should seem a treat in itself—a sort of consolation prize for illness rather than an additional penalty.

In spite of the white grapes, the barley-water and all the extra "spoiling" for the invalid, I vaguely took his embarrassing presence to be a kind of punishment, and so an obscure sense of guilt, or at any rate of disgrace, was joined to my bodily sufferings.

My misunderstanding as to the nature of his office even had practical results. For example, I took his interrogative taps to be testing my courage instead of my organs, and, being then somewhat of a stoic, always felt in honour bound to answer the inquiry, "Does that

hurt?" with as bright a "No, thank you," as could be summoned from a bronchial chest.

It seemed the one and only way of scoring a point, and doubtless I thus suppressed much valuable evidence in the way of pain.

The patient must be the principal witness in his own case, and the skill of a father confessor is often required to elicit a full statement of physical sensations from children, who are nearly all inclined to be extremely reserved in these matters.

So—though too professional a bedside manner may be worse than brutality—conciliating tact is of enormous importance in the children's doctor. He must contrive to coax all their symptoms from them without alarming them as to their importance, and unfailing gentleness in negotiation is most necessary.

How often one has seen those alarming properties, the thermometer and the stethoscope, converted, by their owner's skilful editing, into the most enthralling and consoling toys, whereas other doctors—clumsy or lazy over the preliminary investigations—may start small children crying so uncontrollably, as to make it impossible to sound their lungs properly,

whilst their temperatures are sent up by the agitation. In the case of a small baby, by taking sufficient time and trouble a thorough examination can be made without even rousing it from sleep.

Nurses, owing to painful recollections of children disturbed, frightened and upset on previous visits, are sometimes over-reluctant to send for the doctor.

Indeed, another very important reason for choosing a man with qualities of charm, tact and sympathy as your family doctor, is that he may invite the confidence of the nurse in charge as well as of the children. She is an indispensable ally and must be propitiated, for if, as I have known it to be, her back be put up by an unfortunate manner, her charges may indirectly suffer.

After deciding on a doctor who inspires her with confidence, the mother's business is to see that he is given a proper run for *her* money. If the nurse takes a real dislike to him, one of the two must be changed. To have a doctor's orders neglected, or carried out by some one who mistrusts them, is unfair all round.

It is, of course, impossible to generalize, but,

as a rule, I would rather have the doctor with long practical experience of children, even at the cost of his not being quite so much up to date as an alternative younger man.

Provided (this is, of course, essential) you have a man whom you can implicitly rely on to call in another opinion directly circumstance indicate the advisability of such a step, I would, for the ordinary ups and downs of children's health, sooner have a first-class general practitioner, with a liking for children, than a real child-specialist. To begin with, one does not wish to pay three guineas for each bilious attack, and so long as you can really trust him, if in doubt, to ask for another opinion, your own doctor will often prove the best for cases of humdrum illness.

Naturally a child's doctor must be a good psychologist. The minds and bodies of children react in bewildering vicious circles, and their dispositions and mentalities must always be taken into consideration. But, in these groping days of psychoanalysis, I wonder whether we may not be in real danger of erring on the new side and neglecting the purely physical?

Of two evils I would rather see my child in the hands of the most old-fashioned "Dr. Dose" than in those of one who, in his intelligent interest in temperament, might omit to examine a tell-tale throat.

Such commonplaces as adenoids must not be overlooked in the fascinating search for complexes, and no doctor should ever for a moment cease to be a materialist because he has become a psychologist.

If you find a man who combines theory, practice, kindness and tact, then you need not be afraid of your children concealing aches and pains through their dread of his being sent for; and "playing at doctor" will probably very soon become one of the favourite pastimes in "Mother's day nursery."

XXIII

GOOD-BYES

"*In every parting there is an image of death.*" — George Eliot.

In spite of all that may be said concerning the happiness of what is called the "golden time" of life, and intense as the raptures of childhood doubtless are, it must be conceded that many of the sorrows are correspondingly sharp; and certainly the sufferings some children experience over parting from those they love, will scarcely be equalled in poignancy by any of the leave-takings of maturity.

Grown-up people have so many distractions that circumstances seldom permit of their really attending to their own emotions, let alone of their concentrating on any one particular grief. Besides, to them time gallops, whereas to children, in comparison, it almost stands still.

To us the prospect of a month's separation seems only a very short interruption, but to a child the present, if painful, appears so hopelessly permanent that no ray of light is per-

ceptible through his dark tunnel of immediate misery.

When I was a child the proffered consolation of such a phrase as "It's only for a few weeks" was utterly unavailing; absence was a positive thing and the sense of abandonment a pain. The imminent departure of your mother or your brother or of any one very much loved, seemed to threaten total eclipse, and the wrench of the actual parting was dreaded and dramatized out of all proportion.

At that time, saying good-bye to people at the station was to me a terrible ordeal—nothing short of a surgical operation to the affections. I would never have admitted it, but in reality I would greatly have preferred to be left at home, where I could have locked myself up in the bathroom and wept myself into stupefaction instead of having to parade the platform in the pitiless glare of publicity, that awful burning lump in my throat, and desperately trying to force back the welling tears.

Worst of all platform-partings was the recurring anguish of seeing my brothers off when they returned to school, leaving me to loneliness and lessons. The shadow of impending

departure hung over the last week of the hastening holidays, and when it came to the final day my sense of bereavement was complicated by the fear of disgracing myself and them at the station.

Once in the railway carriage and under the scrutiny of schoolfellows, whatever emotions they themselves might be feeling were concealed behind a convenient screen of *Tit-Bits*, and too well I knew that the possession of a "blubbering" sister might be tease-inspiring. At one time I had a hope that tears were limited in quantity, and so used to try and exhaust my reservoir of them by copiously turning on the waterworks in bed the night before until my handkerchiefs were drenched and my face disfigured. But I soon learnt that the supply depended on the demand, and that there could be no worse preparation for to-morrow's ordeal. So there was nothing for it but to pray for self-control, and, if all else failed, to turn my back on the relentless train and appear unnaturally absorbed in the automatic machines. These could scarcely be seen through a blinding veil of tears, and I remember being given a penny, and in my confusion pulling out a packet of

cigarettes instead of a comforting slab of cocoanut cream.

I think grown-up people are inclined to forget the extent to which these dramas of departure are dramatized to the diminutive. It is, indeed, difficult to remember to make sufficient allowance for the relativity of time, and to realize that to a child a separation of a mere week may appear an almost unendurable prospect.

Some philosophical children are, of course, comparatively impervious; others so easily distractable that they can be consoled by a feast of strawberries and cream or by the anticipation of writing up "welcome" and waving flags when their mother comes home again; but I myself cannot remember being able to derive anything but the coldest comfort from any effort to look forward.

I don't know whether I was in this respect an exceptionally morbid child, but there is no doubt that for me any painful parting was always accompanied by a feeling of vague apprehension. Dim forebodings mingled with my sense of immediate bereavement, so that it was not so much the fact that to-day and to-morrow were emptied and certain rooms ren-

dered desolate which made me suffer, but that apart from this there seemed a sort of menace in the mere fact of absence.

What I obscurely felt—and I'm sure many children share the feeling—was that troubled presentiment which is suggested by separation, the presentiment so supremely expressed in Juliet's words of parting:

> "O God! I have an ill-divining soul;
> Methinks, I see thee, now thou art so low,
> As one dead in the bottom of a tomb:
> Either my eyesight fails, or thou look'st pale."

The promise of a speedy return reassured me as little as it does a dog who trails his drooping tail past the hated trunks, so plainly telling of his coming abandonment.

Fortunately the sorrows of childhood are for the most part as transient as they are acute. Certainly mine were seldom of long duration. Two or three days would suffice to soothe the pain of absence and to allay the foolish fears it had aroused.

But awaking, the first morning after your mother had gone away, to the feeling of loss and loneliness was very hard to bear. Whilst you were still on the threshold of sleep a vague

uneasy questioning sense disquieted you. What was the matter? What had happened? And then suddenly, out of gathering consciousness, full realization leapt violently upon you and you were enfolded in dull desolation—your heart aching until the ache reached right up to your head.

I remember how greatly in those days my feelings used to be lacerated by that common type of story-book in which during the first-chapter the little hero's and heroine's father and mother depart for India for a period of three years, leaving them to the cold care of an iron-grey uncle.

How often grown-up people mentally congratulate children on their inability to look ahead, forgetting that while this short view renders them both impervious to worry as to their future and wholeheartedly responsive to temporary treats, it at the same time makes them hopelessly susceptible to passing pains and sorrows.

We, who have learned to look beyond to-day, thereby acquire a certain immunity. Even in the blackest night we can believe in the dawn, just as in the brightest dawn we are unable to

forget the coming night. But a child is completely the prey of the present. During the winter he is unconscious of the spring, during the spring he is unconscious of the winter. In the grip of his first toothache he has no hope of its cessation, for his memory holds no pledge of recovery, and with his first heartaches, it is exactly the same. His sufferings are therefore exaggerated in precisely the same manner as are his enjoyments. His small cup of woe is as easily filled as his small cup of bliss.

We, to whom the present is no longer so autocratic, and who sometimes score and sometimes lose by having learnt its insufficiency, must be as tolerant of the drawbacks due to our children's subserviency to it as we are delighted with the advantages.

XXIV

GRANDPARENTS

"But when I see thee at thy father's side,
Old times unqueen thee."

HARTLEY COLERIDGE.

"FANCY poor Bobby hasn't got either a rocking-horse or a grandfather!" Thus I heard a small boy exclaim in a tone of the deepest sympathy.

His compassion was well-placed. Certainly grandparents are, as a rule, very agreeable possessions for children, being inclined to be quite as exaggeratedly appreciative of them as their father and mother, but much less inconveniently concerned with character-training.

Pleasantly unpreoccupied by anxiety as to the after effects of indulgence, they take far less thought for the morrow, and are therefore apt to be correspondingly generous with treats and tenderness to-day—sometimes, indeed, perhaps thinking more of their own present than of the children's future.

"They sow and they shall not reap." This, a suitable motto, partially explains why it is that the "heavy father" so often makes the light grandfather.

Undoubtedly many a sober citizen who had always brought his own children up with the utmost sense of responsibility, having perpetually thought of future development rather than of immediate fun, and never allowed tenderness to interfere with discipline, once he is promoted to the rank of a grandfather, flings precept and restraint to the winds and, to the occasional demoralization of his children's children, becomes an absolute mush of concession. Ceasing to be ulterior, he concentrates on the immediate, wishing his grandchildren to gather as many rosebuds as possible whilst he himself may still witness their delight. Thus his tendency will be to spoil in order that he may gain the quick return of uncritical childish love.

The wish to raise a look of rapture on the sensitive face of a child is an impulse like that felt towards plucking a flower or eating a sweet, and its gratification is a pleasure a certain type of fond grandfather finds very difficult to forego,

now that he feels, so to speak, out of office and, like a retired policeman, in a holiday mood. The heat and burden of the day is behind him, and it is not surprising that he should relax in the cool of the evening.

His own children were expenses and responsibilities, so let those delicious playthings his grandchildren be treasures not subject to any moral taxation.

And how tempting to encourage little feet to dance along the primrose path, rather than to tread the hard and narrow one pointed out by pompous parents.

Of course there is the reverse type—dear to fiction but hard to find—of the austere grandparent who thinks children should be seen not heard, regards them as disturbing superfluities, and is for ever regretting the rods of yesteryear.

In their grandchildren these recognize symptoms of all the qualities they most deplored in their own children. True, in the case of their sons and daughters they had just managed to keep these bad tendencies in check by their own wise control. But the badly brought up children of this generation are not subject to any

such redeeming restraint, and so their grumbling grandparents grimly predict their coming to no good.

But, whether they are lenient or severe, grandparents are almost certain to mistrust their own children's capability for bringing up their offspring. One of the great difficulties in life is to realize that your own sons and daughters have emerged from the chrysalis phase and become responsible and independent human beings. To a mother—particularly to a very fond one—her daughter still seems like a dressed-up child playing at being a grown-up person; and to watch her pretending to be a real mother, is like seeing a child playing with dolls. All very charming and pretty so long as it is merely a matter of Ride-a-cock horse and curling their hair, but when it comes to questions of hygiene, fresh air, food and sleep—then a truce to this folly! The reins must be snatched by experienced hands.

Added to which nursery methods change so rapidly, and it is as natural for the elderly to mistrust new-fangled notions as it is for the young to pin their faith in the newest panaceas, and so ensuing disagreements often lead to

what an embarrassed nurse may consider unwarrantable interference.

But how absolutely understandable all this is, and how tolerant of criticism the in-between generation should be! Impossible for them to be too careful never by any show of resentment to do anything to impair the mutual benefit and delight of the other two.

Even if there is no actual friction over the management of your children, you must in any case never expect to be given any credit for either their behaviour or their health.

You may well be blamed for every cold in their heads and for every sign of "nerves," but, however much you may consider the effect of everything you do and say on their constitutions and their characters, if the result is *successful*, you will probably only be congratulated on your luck, not on your good judgment.

"How fortunate you are to have such healthy, well-behaved children," is what will be said—the implication being that they are satisfactory in spite, and not on account, of what you have done.

There is also often an amusing tendency to

undermine parental discipline by the attitude adopted by the grandmother towards the mother in the presence of her children, one by no means conducive to the observance of the fifth commandment. A sense of humour at the expense of their parent is rapidly developed by the elder generation, comic anecdotes about her when she was a silly little girl and expressed contempt for her present views uniting to push her off her precarious pedestal.

But all these things are matter for laughter, not for frowns, and nothing is more delightful than two generations adoring the third.

Their grandparents should figure as largely as possible in children's lives. They are always an irreplaceable and often a beautiful element, and the world seems sadly emptied without their beloved figures.

Most children remember vaguely puzzling as to their status.

"Mother's mother"—"Daddy's daddy"—gave one to think when first the explanation was offered.

Did Nurse have a nurse?

Did the Queen have a queen?

Now that people no longer deliberately step

into old age, as they used to do when they behaved according to the number of their birthdays without consulting their feelings, just as old-fashioned households start fires according to the calendar instead of according to the thermometer; now that we remain young until we become decrepit, it must be even more puzzling for children to make out the position of grandparents.

The grandfather and grandmother in their story-books are such venerable figures, snowy crowned and bespectacled old folk to be visited by their own fireside, and so feeble as to make the merest mouthful for Red Riding Hood's wolf.

On the other hand, their own grandfather plays golf and tennis, while Grandmamma is to all intents and purposes a contemporary of Mother's, and would as soon be seen in a shroud as in a shawl.

In fact, if they are good examples of mellowed humanity, they should strip so-called age of much of its menace, presenting, as they do, such excellent credentials for that voyage on which the children themselves are just embarking.

XXV

THE DOWAGER BABY

"*Envy's a coal come hissing hot from Hell.*"
PHILIP BAILEY.

IN any family where the first-born has for three years or more remained the only child, the arrival of the second baby is likely to create a psychological situation demanding very careful and skilful handling.

A monopoly expires, the curtain falls on an autocracy; and, precisely in those cases where his autocracy has been permitted to appear too pronounced, there, at the crisis of its abrupt termination, the poor dowager baby is often treated with an almost callous lack of consideration. To be the sole lessee of the parental love of a leisured father and mother is indeed to lie in a most effective incubator for latent egotism. Just consider the unchallenged supremacy of a spoilt only child. His premises are sacred to him—and his right there is none to dispute. "Nannie," that indefatigable slave of the lamp,

is apparently without any other claims on her time and affection. "Mother" and "Father," whenever they come upstairs or he patronizes their precincts, appear beings dedicated to his entertainment. The cook tiptoes into the room to simper at him lying in state in his cot, and there seems, indeed, a general conspiracy to give him a misleading impression as to life and his own importance. The centre of that entire universe of which he can form any conception—the position of the sun in the solar system could scarcely seem more undisputed.

So, unless the situation be carefully edited, what wonder if to the poor little cock of the roost of yesterday, his whole world seems shattered and his trust betrayed now that, without any warning or by your leave, he finds his premises invaded, his subjects preoccupied, his very actions cribbed, cabin'd and confined?

Instead of his every word being acclaimed as a symptom of remarkable intelligence and all noisiness encouraged as proof of vitality, he is now continually told to be quiet, lest he "wake baby." During several hours of his emptied day he must not even run about on his own floor, the gramophone and all noisy toys are

stowed away out of reach, Mother cannot play with him, and Nurse is too busy to attend to him. In the general commotion questions remain unanswered, oranges unpeeled and musical boxes unwound. Even those so solemn rites — his hair-brushing and his bath — may be left to the clumsy hands of an uncomfortable new creature called a nurserymaid. The whole order of things has changed, and custom is smashed; he is jostled about or kept waiting, and all this confusion, in the midst of which he feels hurt and bewildered, can only be associated with an unexplained flannel bundle "mewling and puking" in *his* nurse's arms.

No soothing ceremony attends this sudden deposition. For the poor baby dowager there is no dignified retreat to a dower-house, but in his dwindled dignity he can only stay and sulk amidst spoiled surroundings.

A blessing is thus allowed to appear in the guise of a calamity. For, if he is really allowed to feel neglected and set aside, what wonder if that first touching complete assurance, which is such a lovely flourish set on a happy confident child, is swiftly undermined and disappears in perplexity.

The hitherto solid ground fails beneath his feet, and he floats in a sea of doubt.

When the arrival of a new baby is thus allowed to be the occasion of the iron first entering into a child's soul through the unaccustomed sense of loneliness, not only is a golden opportunity for instilling the most enriching kind of love missed, but risk is run of sowing "complexes" in the fertile soil of hurt feelings, thereby busily cutting out future work for the psychoanalyst.

The immediate suffering, too common on these occasions and possibly resulting in permanent mischief, is surely always almost entirely due to mismanagement.

A flicker of jealousy is natural enough to the child who henceforth must share with another the same love and the same rooms, and this flicker can easily be allowed to flare into flame, but I'm sure there is no situation more susceptible to skilful editing than the close of an only child reign. It lies in the hands of the presiding "grown-ups" of his little world to turn on the current of love or of hate, and theirs is a responsibility which should be acutely realized.

By taking a little trouble, the tactful and imaginative can in most cases so easily forestall jealousy. Instead of which how often is it actually suggested by remarks of such criminal calibre as "Now your nose is out of joint." "Who has got to take a back seat now?" Could anything be more directly encouraging to the green-eyed monster?

It seems obvious that no hint as to the possibility of such a thing as jealousy should ever be dropped in the presence of the dowager baby, instead of which the painful emotion is busily cultivated by continual comments, nurses and mothers sometimes even boasting of the pangs of jealousy suffered on their account. "He won't let me touch baby!"

The seed of that calamity, a lasting dislike between brothers, might well be sown by one injudicious phrase. But, on the other hand, where the situation has been well handled from the outset I have never seen any serious trouble. So much depends on the first introduction. "Here is a baby-brother for *you*" is the note to strike, and any amount of variations can be played on the same theme.

With the help of a little skilful propaganda,

the newcomer will be welcomed as a wonderful asset instead of resented as a tiresome disturbance; and, not only will a baby be appreciated as a super-toy beyond the wildest dreams of Christmas Eve, but those luxuries—the senses of pride, obligation and guardianship, will all be excited to the rapid promotion of love.

I have seen many children of four most pleasurably puffed-up with tender pride in the little brother or sister they have been "given to take care of." And on what an admirable training-ground for gentleness, patience and forbearance are they thus placed. There could be no better way of learning that payment for privilege must not be grudged, and that love involves service and sacrifice.

"Now that you are so lucky as to have a brother, you must help Nannie to look after it for you by being good." A word or two of this kind will compensate even for the inconvenience of having to forego a noisy romp, or for finding Nurse too busy to read aloud.

Pride—and pride of a wholesome nature—will sweeten sacrifice provided the child is occasionally allowed to "help," however great

the hindrance of his help may be, and at the compliment, "What should we do without you?" his cup will overflow.

No fear of thus cultivating egotism, a plant which does not grow beside the sense of obligation, and one that is far more effectually watered by mortification than by gratification.

One has heard hair-raising stories of children deliberately trying to injure the defenceless baby. If true, I'm sure such attempts can only have resulted from the mischievous mismanagement of feelings. The little brother or sister must have been introduced as a rival instead of as a possession, and his presence allowed to seem an annoyance instead of an amusement.

From little girls it should be especially easy to secure the most appreciative welcome for a long-clothes baby, who, in addition to many superior claims, has, at any rate, that of being a superlative doll. Boys, who have hitherto always enjoyed quite unchecked romping and been allowed to be rough with their toys, may well be somewhat dangerous, however well disposed. But supervision can easily obviate risk, and to be brought up in the hurly-burly

of an elder brother is admirably hardening to the nerves. And later on how enjoyable is the hero-worship inspired by the big boy who has reached that delicious phase in which he is obsessed by the desire to be manly, wears trousers and cropped hair, and yet sees nothing in the least incongruous in taking three woolly animals to bed with him every night.

With what admiration the small one will applaud the deeds of derring do performed by the boy he thinks so large, in wide-eyed wonder watching his feats of climbing and jumping, and perpetually parodying them by his pathetic attempts of follow-my-leader—a game which unconsciously he will be playing from breakfast to bedtime. The enjoyment and profit is mutual, for the big brother will enjoy so enthusiastic a gallery; and even though it encourage showing off, the effect should be beneficial. *Noblesse oblige*, and so condescension will usually be accompanied by the fast-developing germ of consideration. The Spartan satisfaction found in pain well-borne, a very considerable one to most boys, will be greatly enhanced by the adoring admiration of a small spectator, and to have a thorn or a first tooth

extracted without flinching will be much more worth while if he is at the same time setting a good example to "little brother."

No doubt he will be patronizing, but what matter provided he be at the same time protective? The appeal of smallness to a child's imagination may be as strong as that of bigness, and if each appreciate the size of the other, to whom he is the foil, how mutually becoming are the pair of blossoming brothers!

XXVI

"GETTING BIG"

"We want, we two—impossible things—
To see the flight, yet clip the wings;
To keep the bud, yet find the flower;
Live on, yet pause, upon the hour."

MATHEW BROWNE.

CHILDHOOD is a succession of closing chapters and finishing phases; and always to encourage her son's advance by welcoming his—to her often so painful—progress, is by no means the easiest part of a mother's task.

How sadly soon the shoes (bought a size too big) and the perambulator (seemingly large as a landau when first it blocked the hall) are hopelessly outgrown!

But these facts, however inconvenient, admit of no doubt, and must be accepted.

It is to the more subtle forms of growth that an erring mother might, in reluctance to accept the inevitable bereavements of alteration, endeavour to close her eyes.

And yet, from the wish to prolong a temporary treat, to try insidiously to imprison a

child's behaviour and personality in a passing phase, however pleasing, may be just as injurious as to persevere in forcing his feet into outgrown shoes.

Impossible not to acknowledge that he is now too big to wear his last year's clothes, however pretty; but not so easy to realize that the tender treatment of last year—however tempting its continuation—is every bit as much outgrown.

How sadly strewn with jettisoned charms and relinquished delights is the correct course of a child! Glittering curls must be cut, enchanting absurdities of tripping speech and gait suffer sad reform—his whole delicious baby behaviour become gradually abandoned.

Development is for ever dealing death in life to a thousand transitory beauties and delights. Blow after blow is struck at babyhood, and the mourning mother must encourage the battle, applauding the destruction of so perfect and precious a plaything.

The child of yesterday for ever disappears into the changeling of to-morrow. The temporary toy turns into the permanent puzzle, and in her child's kaleidoscopic personality the

mother can scarcely distinguish the string connecting all the bewilderingly different beads.

To the right kind of child his continual promotion will be the main preoccupation. Even at the age when clothes are still neuter, that diminutive iconoclast a healthy boy will, in his fever to be manly, struggle to dispense with all frills and furbelows. He will soon become impatient of help and protection, and be for ever threatening by talk of "When I'm big." Shaking at the bars of his prison of dependence, he will always want to "feed self," "walk self," "dress self," and be for ever striding out of safety and sameness towards risks and responsibilities.

In the case of an eldest child, his mother, rich in the possession of others, will probably be willing enough to aid and abet his escape from the nursery. She will take pride instead of pain in his growing size and independence, and revel in the spirit of progress which makes him acclaim each birthday as a glorious achievement.

On his third, behold him renaming Daddy "Father," and his knickers "chowsers," and on his fourth clamouring to have his hair cut.

In his first sailor suit he exclaims, "Now I'm the beginning of an admiral," and the mother delights in this general attitude of anticipation, seeing the charms of his present phase, not as an end in themselves, but as the first-fruits and intimations of her future harvests.

Even going too far in this direction, she may so fix her eyes on the future, that some of the present passes without full appreciation, and her child is quickly hurried through and out of childhood. Needless to say the evils of extensive cultivation may be even worse than those of artificially preserved childishness.

But how different is the case of an only or even of a youngest child. Then it is indeed hard duly to encourage all the steps, each of which inexorably leads away from you. Yet how diligently must you equip him for his dreaded departure, and be for ever, as it were, sharpening weapons to be used against yourself.

A child of two or three can be so enthralling, entertaining and consoling a "piece of work," that you long to be able to crystallize his transitory charm, your inclination being to treat him as a cut flower rather than as a growing tree.

In the desire to make him linger in so poignantly lovable a state, instead of praising you would like to punish his progress. To leave off lisping, and to learn to walk steadily, seem the most undesirable accomplishments, and, each word, for the first time correctly pronounced, gives you a pang, as though a knell.

Is there not the temptation to make pets of his very defects and to lament his overcoming of them?

Though each phase has its own charm and interest, how difficult not to pine for relinquished ones!

But, however much it steal away delight, you must stiffen yourself into a show of welcome to each successive development—and try to shut your ears to the "never-never more" in all the lovely fleeting sights and sounds. . . .

One obvious pitfall for an un-Spartan mother, is over-long to postpone what may be called the "dismantling" of a boy. In the case of the first so anxiously-awaited son, she is probably only too eager to accentuate the difference between him and his elder sisters. He runs the risk of being "breeched" so soon as he

is out of long clothes, and his hair will be cropped close as his father's.

But when there are no girls on whom to exercise a taste for the decorative, how difficult to sacrifice the picturesque to convention, to condemn curls and fold away gay garments!

Many boys are such thoroughly ready-made miniature men—such pocket editions of their fathers, that no one could be tempted to try and trifle with their reach-me-down and masculine appearance.

By the time they are two years old, you know just what they will look like when they go to their public school. Their hair cries out to be cut, and anything but the plainest clothes appear absurd.

Others, tantalizingly romantic with their looks of woodland sprite or mediæval page, it seems impious to have to crop and becollar. In conventional clothes they look like wild flowers wired, and to shear their shining heads seems vandalism.

With some children their picturesque appearance is, indeed, so much a part of their personality, that ruthlessly to alter it demands real stoicism.

No reason to be over-precipitate. Your child need not conform to pattern too soon, but tease-inspiring modes must never be persisted in. So soon as a boy is made uneasy about his appearance, you must steel your heart. However golden the fleece, it must fall. He may come and tell you he is asked, in derision, whether he be boy or girl, and once you let him associate any mortification with a whim of your own, you incur his just indignation.

With girls there are, in externals at least, no such crossways, no occasion deliberately to condemn charms. But what, after all, is the cutting of curls compared with the necessary untying of apron strings?

The little cradled creature it was your duty to shield from every possible harm—from even the smallest draught—has so soon turned into the danger-doomed boy, for ever fretting at the trammels of your tenderness.

You must now encourage him to terrify you and—by urging him on to the physical proficiency that inevitably leads to the running of risk—be for ever tying yourself to the stake of consuming anxiety.

Such a short while ago and he could not even

walk without your hand, and came downstairs with two feet on each step, and now how far out of sight he has run with scarcely one backward glance over his shoulder!

Children's light-hearted indifference as to the anxieties they inflict on their elders is part of their cruel right.

To betray your fears for them is to inflate them with a sense of their fine rashness, or, if they are soft-hearted, to spoil their fun.

Thoughtlessness for others is one of their privileges, and to control her nerves amongst the first duties of a mother.

Though, in imagination, she fall from every tree in the garden, she must sternly steel herself, and, in unsuspected suffering, let her son go the way of all boys in climbing. And, for all her dread of the dangers of emulation, how necessary always to encourage her son to play with companions of his own age. To realize how soon your own child is ready for each successive extension of liberty is indeed difficult—there being no automatic age qualification for the various degrees of independence.

The pace of progress proper to particular children varies so extraordinarily. The duty

of her who holds the reins is neither through ambition to over-urge, nor through apprehension unnecessarily to apply the brake.

However contented with the road her children are on, she must always be willing to acquiesce in the turning of a corner; however fond of the familiar, always be ready to "greet the unseen with a cheer."

XXVII

THEIR PHOTOGRAPHS

"I might immortalize a few
Of all the myriad graces
Which Time, while yet they all are new,
With newer still replaces."

PRAED.

PHOTOGRAPHS of one's children are certainly amongst the things which fail to improve on acquaintance. Sometimes you are delighted with the first sight of the eagerly-awaited proofs, in excitement losing your head, to the extent of ordering many more copies than the family exchequer can afford.

These are elaborately framed and prominently displayed; but very soon pleasure yields to an increasing disappointment, and before long the photographs are relegated to the seclusion of dusty drawers.

It is impossible to live with these tantalizing travesties, so subtly belying the well-loved faces and forms; and the annoyance to the nerves is cumulative. The fact that they may

be what strangers call "speaking likenesses," makes them all the more trying—their speech in time rising to a yell! Expressions and attitudes (especially those of children) are part of a sequence. To see one particular look, one particular pose, arrested and isolated in perpetuity, is like hearing one word, detached from its context, ceaselessly repeated instead of followed by others, or one note struck again and again until it becomes a horror. You would get as much idea of the spirit of a river by only seeing such of its waters as are framed between the gates of a lock.

Since even good photographs, for the most part, fail to give lasting satisfaction, what of the thoroughly bad ones which cannot even please at first sight?

"The camera cannot lie" is a statement that will not be endorsed by the exasperated mother who, after all the stress and strain of taking children to be photographed, is presented with a dozen libels and a large bill. In nine cases out of ten her disappointment will be intense.

Her children's faces may be sensitive as the surface of a pool—one expression for ever chasing after another—but on their photo-

graphs this enchanting kaleidoscope is too often congealed into a stare of shocked surprise or—worse still—into an inane stock smile. They might be "registering" horror or embarrassment for the Films. The twinkling fingers are clenched, and the whole attitude is as uncomfortable as it is uncharacteristic.

Attempts at embellishment have been made by "touching up"—eyelashes being exaggerated and dimples invented; but where is the familiar grace, the shining spirit, the humour and the pathos of diminutive dignity?

Since—however inadequate the best—you *must* have photographs of your changing children, if not to mock you from frames at least to be pasted into a book (how often will the best in it be your own snapshots enlarged), it is worth examining into the causes of the recurring failures and trying to avoid the more obvious pitfalls of the studio.

Doubtless even the most unenlightened photographer has by now discarded the barbaric practice of placing the head in a vise to secure immobility, but, even nowadays, photography is apt to be too much like an operation.

When I was a child the prospect of being

photographed was very much on a par with that of the extraction of a tooth, only one was without the standing of a heroine or the payment of the 2s. 6d. damages. Unnaturally dressed and unusually brushed, I was taken into a strange Inquisition-like room. There an odiously familiar man perched me on some peculiarly uncomfortable piece of furniture and then petrified me with the startling prediction that "Pussy" was about to emerge from the camera.

How vividly I remember the agonized suspense of awaiting her dreaded spring from the mysterious box. As a crowning horror to strained nerves the photographer then covered himself with a black pall, from the grim folds of which his voice emerged in the ghastly attempt at a playful "Cuckoo!" Can one wonder at the glare of horror so faithfully reported by the camera, the staring eyes, the opened mouth?

Mothers who hope for good results must make sure the photographer they choose has relinquished such antiquated methods, and in place of these shock-tactics he must not have adopted the more modern tricks, such as order-

ing the sitter to say "Good-morning, good morning, good morning," in order to make his mouth a certain shape.

So far from the studio being a Chamber of Horrors, to very young children a visit to it should seem a treat, not an ordeal. Instead of being frightened they must be amused. It is not sufficient that a child's head is no longer actually fixed, he must be given free play in every way, and allowed to roam about until, of his own accord, he temporarily settles and gives a chance to the photographer, who will have had the sense to equip a part of his studio like the nursery of one's dreams.

The camera should be camouflaged, and the room full of enchanting incident calculated to lure any child out of the disfiguring mask of self-consciousness. Instead of being made to blink by having one moth-eaten toy animal flourished before its eyes, the child—like a bee in a herbaceous border—should stray about at will until some imperative attraction rivets his attention, evoking that expression of rapt concentration which is one of the chief beauties of childhood.

He must never be cajoled by threats or by

bribery, in fact he should not *know* the object of the visit. Instead of being told to smile, because he is going to be photographed, the photograph should be taken because he is smiling. Expressions, to be natural, must, so to speak, be stalked, not driven, and good results are seldom obtained by a child's attention being forcibly attracted towards the camera.

The more engrossed he is in some self-chosen occupation the better, and, if the studio is properly equipped, attention-traps will abound and ample opportunity thus be given for time exposures. No great expenditure at Hamley's need be involved, for children delight in unintentional toys. For instance, a child fascinated by the loud ticking of a Grandfather clock gives a splendid opportunity for an attractive photograph, its height making a good foil to the smallness of the spellbound form. Goldfish swimming round a bowl will also becomingly arrest his attention, or the telephone receiver held to his ear, and, if he is unselfconsciously amused by looking at himself in a long mirror, he will give chances for lovely photographs of himself and his reflection.

The great thing is that the mother should be on the watch for propitious moments, and signal to the photographer, who must be in constant readiness to seize his opportunity. Any amount of snapshots should be taken, and he must be willing to sacrifice a dozen plates to secure two good results. For this reason it is usually waste of money to go to a cheap photographer, who cannot be expected to put himself to such an expense.

The most maddening thing about the conventional photographer is the way in which he misses golden opportunities, allowing enchanting expressions to escape, because of some quite trivial point, such as the incorrect position of a finger. By the time the finger has been drilled, the head has turned and all's to do again!

Taking one child to be photographed is a comparatively simple affair, but the mother of several will be irresistibly tempted to tackle the difficulties of a group. This is nearly always doomed to disappointment. It is such unusual luck to secure any one photograph in which each member of the family comes out well, and the simultaneous immobility of several children can scarcely look natural.

Dressing children up for the occasion is usually a mistake. Unaccustomed finery has a disturbing effect, they are much more likely to be spontaneous in everyday clothes, and provided their lines are good, the material is of comparatively little importance.

Generally a child will have some favourite occupation, his picturesque enjoyment in which you will wish to record—perhaps paddling or gardening; and this being so, of course the garments appropriate to the occasion should be worn. All details as to dress and hair should be finally decided on in the dressing-room. Once in the studio, there must be no distracting dabs with a brush or pulling on and off of hats and socks.

A very delightful way of photographing a baby is on its mother's or nurse's knee, enveloped in a large towel, as though just lifted warm and wet from kicking in his bath. In the future this will eloquently recall the cosey sheltered atmosphere of babyhood.

If a child cherishes some temporary totem—a Teddy bear or monkey, as the case may be—by all means allow him to hold the beloved object. Nothing will tend to make him look

more characteristic, or better serve to perpetuate a phase.

Elder children will probably look best apparently engrossed with some favourite pursuit, bending over a book, a paint-box or a draught-board.

No doubt when the process becomes cheaper, the custom will be to have children cinematographed. Thus their everyday life will be photographed, and, when they are grown up, parents will be able to see them once again at play. Children are as inseparable from movement as is running water: without it, their "likeness" must remain something of a mockery. No doubt posterity will think our static photographs as inadequate for purposes of remembrances as we now consider the silhouettes of bygone generations.

XXVIII

THE CHILDREN'S CHRONICLE

"Your own fair youth, you care so little for it,
Smiling towards Heaven, you would not stay the advances
Of time and change upon your happiest fancies.
I keep your golden hour, and will restore it
If ever, in time to come, you would explore it."

ALICE MEYNELL.

EVERY mother should be the diligent chronicler of her own family—with the first baby starting a book wherein all his physical developments, and later on his sayings and doings, are faithfully reported. This is one of the efforts well worth while, and one the neglect of which many people deeply regret.

The purely practical advantages are sufficiently apparent, for, by keeping a careful chart of all such matters as weight, length, diet and illness, not only will you find it extremely interesting to compare the progress of one child with that of another, but you will also be

collecting valuable data with which to supply an investigating doctor. The ages at which individual children pass all the obvious nursery milestones—so eagerly acclaimed, so quickly forgotten—are very symptomatic; not to be able to answer any inquiry their doctor may choose to make should cover a mother with confusion; and to wish to give your second child the particular food on which your first did so well, but to find yourself unable to remember its name, is indeed to feel foolish.

So never trust to the tablets of your memory, but keep a careful log-book of each voyage through babyhood. How many mothers, from forgetfulness, run on the same rocks twice!

Such a record will also be of great interest to a full-grown child. It will amuse him to know at what age he chose to crawl, how early he achieved walking, and whether he learnt to talk sooner or later than his brother.

As for his quaint sayings, his picturesque phrases and comic questions, he will never tire of hearing them quoted. "Tell me about when I was little," is the reiterated demand; and how the young rationalist of nine enjoys an indulgent smile at the two-year-old self

who refused to have a fire lit on Christmas Eve for fear of Father Christmas burning his toes as he came down the chimney.

But never, on any account, let a small child know you are keeping a book about him—least of all writing down his remarks. In becoming facetious, he may well cease to be funny, bringing on himself the crushing reproof, "Don't try to be clever!"

A child's wit is nearly always unintentional—any playing to the gallery generally a failure; but his early gift of expression, his power—by felicitous phrasing—of reviving tired words to pristine freshness, his directness of description and instinct for the exact epithet, are often so startling as to raise the highest hopes for his future—hopes, however, usually doomed to disappointment, for in a few years freshness of style dries up with loss of the divine gift of wonder, and the tongues of angels settle down to the most commonplace vocabularies, just as the most irresistibly quaint children may grow into hopelessly normal men.

Babyhood, alas! holds practically no pledge for maturity.

Pope tells us he "lisped in numbers, for the

numbers came"; but, owing to the negligence of mothers, how little we know of the early promptings of poets—how scarce our evidence as to any childish manifestations of the gift of speech. How interested we should be to know the first sentences spoken by "stupendous Shakespeare," or some of the baby murmurings of "majestic Milton." So see to it that no precious phrases prattled by potential poets on your own knee be lost to posterity for lack of a recording mother.

Merely to write down bare facts and quote actual sayings is easy enough, but the more ambitious biographer will strive to fill in the outlines, and, by careful description, to hoard passing impressions and emotions. Such persistent chronicling is one of the few ways of protecting your life from the devastating course of "Time's hurrying chariot"—remembrance being the one small spoke that can be thrust into its whirling wheels.

In the autumn of her life, circumstances usually conspire to make a mother turn more and more to contemplation of the past. For her emotional sustenance she is liable to rely increasingly on her unassailable memories.

So let her, in the heyday of motherhood, prudently provide for her future by carefully garnering every available detail of her children's lives. Not to try and describe the vanishing phases of their personalities in writing, is as improvident as neglecting to photograph their so swiftly changing forms and faces. How many mothers—desperately attempting to make material things do more than they can—will cherish locks of hair (so soon to fade)—outgrown garments—even the teeth of their children, and yet all the while fail to preserve the memory of their adorable sayings, quaint imaginings and lovable ways.

Even the most loving memory is strangely untrustworthy—your immediate impressions of your children as they now appear are probably so distinct, so startlingly vivid, that it requires a considerable effort of the imagination to remind yourself that, in your mental pictures of them, the colours will be for ever fading, the outlines blurring, as one image usurps another, the present always effacing the past.

Is it possible things so strangely sweet in experience can ever grow blurred and be shrouded in oblivion?

Curious and pathetic the powerlessness of even the most intense appreciation to embalm the enjoyed and fix the fleeting.

So kaleidoscopic is childish personality that it is difficult to keep any sense of the abiding in the transient, and to recognize its changes as different phases in one and the same development.

You are so soon robbed of your baby by, as it were, a changeling child, in his turn almost to disappear through the process of growth. To see the baby in the child and the child in the man—to miss none of the pathos and humour of the blended perception—is the bitter-sweet privilege of a mother; and the more complete her gallery of pictures, the wider the vision for that inward eye—the bliss of solitude—the greater her immunity against chance and changing time.

Memories are the savings from life—motherhood's sinking-fund against old age, when the present may have little or nothing further to bring in. A careful record of passing events and impressions will be a safe investment, to which she will be able to have recourse whenever she wishes to revisit empty scenes and

recapture past emotions, the very memory of which might otherwise have vanished as irretrievably as dew in the sunshine.

These considerations should in themselves be sufficient motive to urge her to the trifling task of keeping a children's chronicle: added to which, unless she be an exception to her sex, the hope and belief that, in so doing, she is providing valuable material for the National Biography as well as for the philology of the future will probably be some time in dying. Considering how apt women are to think their own offspring conspicuously exceptional, it is all the more surprising that so few amongst them should take upon themselves the office of historian. It is, indeed, difficult not to regard your own child as an infant prodigy, the early achievements of the most normal of babies seeming so miraculous that it is scarcely possible not to gape in gratified astonishment at such startling progress.

You have perpetually to remind yourself that, not only was this same astonishing capacity to distinguish one thing from another, to overcome the stupendous difficulties of speech, and to learn to read and write, given to

the very dullest of your acquaintances, but also the same enterprising audacity to conquer the difficulties and dangers of standing and walking.

Provided you keep it up to date, such a book is, after all, very little trouble. Writing up arrears is, of course, a great strain, particularly in the case of the funny remarks inevitable from all children. Write these down straight from the Mint. Very likely you are so intensely amused by them at the time that you cannot believe they will ever escape from your memory; but how often you find yourself wondering whatever it was that So and so said the other day? In vain you search your own and other people's memories. The delicious absurdity or the lovely phrase is irretrievably lost.

It will be necessary to enlist your nurse as an ally, for she will often be the only witness of memorable conversations. Encourage her to report any of the children's sayings which strike her as either peculiar or pleasing. Give her a book for the purpose, and beg her to write in it daily, and show it to you at intervals. Don't let her trust to her memory, or not only will precious phrases be lost, but she will also

be liable to take the opportunity of your visits to the nursery to quote the children's remarks in front of them.

Remember that, in addition to the certain benefit to yourself and the possible one to humanity, you will all the while be laying up a treasure trove of interest and amusement for your children themselves.

Nothing so tickles and touches one as any anecdote about one's own childhood. A peculiar expression of almost fatuous tenderness flits across the most life-beaten face at any reminder of some half-forgotten episode of infancy.

I can even imagine a well-kept book of the kind I advise doing much invaluable rescue work. The vivid conjuring up of the poignant past would often be potent to thaw the frozen and rivet the broken in the neglected present.

How easy for a pompous estrangement between grown-up brothers to dissolve in laughter, at the reawakened remembrance of some forgotten lovable foolishness shared by the diminutive selves of long, long ago.

How often to remember would be to forgive!

There could be no more inspired prayer than "Lord, keep my memory green"—no better family safeguard than the cultivation of remembrance.